Opening the Dark System Reference Document Version 1.3

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Game Terms

Action: One activity performed during a set interval of time. Characters can take multiple actions at a penalty.

Art: A fundamental magical style.

Attribute: One of nine character traits that describe basic aptitudes.

Charge: An abstract unit that powers supernatural abilities.

Critical Failure: A disaster that might take place after scoring one or more 1s on dice and no successes.

Dice Pool: A number of dice figures by adding ranks fro applicable character traits, often an Attribute and Skill. Roll the pool, but do not add the results. Count successes instead.

Difficulty: The successes needed to accomplish a task.

Emotional Traits: Traits that measure a character's emotional capabilities.

Essence: The innate energies possessed by some supernatural beings.

Ethos: A character's belief system, represented by a 1 to 10 rating.

Health: A measure of how much serious injury a character can withstand before dying, and a type of damage that represents such injuries.

Points: Character traits that routinely rise and fall in play.

Power Path: A chain of strictly defined supernatural powers.

Praxis: A loose category of magical ability.

Rank: A character trait that rarely changes in play. For example, a character's Will *points* fluctuate, but his Will *ranks* are only increased with XP.

Scene: An abstract moment of game time that covers a specific point in the story or a series of closely inked events – less time than an entire game session but longer than a single turn.

Skill: A trained ability.

Stun: A measure of how much minor injury a character can withstand before dying, and a type of damage that represents such injuries.

Success: Rolling 7 or higher on a die. Rolling 10 scores two successes.

Toughness: A character's resistance to injury. Armor adds to effective Toughness.

Turn: A unit of time that equals a few seconds, or enough time to perform a basic combat action.

XP: Experience Points. These are awarded at the end of each game session. Players can spend them to improve character traits.

Character Creation Steps

Here's a summary of the ten steps you'll use to create a character.

1. Concept (Heroic, Standard or Gritty Spread)
2. Persona and Being (Choose one each)
3. Emotional Traits (8, 7 or 6 ranks)
4. Ethos (Prudence + Stoicism)
5. Will (Passion) and Madness (0)
6. Attributes (8/5/3, 7/4/3 or 5/4/3)
7. Skills (15/10/7, 12/8/6 or 8/6/4)
8. Bonus Traits (24, 18 or 12)
9. Background Traits (spend Bonus Traits)
10. Options (Change your character for extra Bonus Traits, if desired)

Concept

At this stage, the GM will tell you which character creation spread to use from among the following:

Heroic: Heroic characters are larger than life: tougher, smarter, and more resourceful than typical horror or dark fantasy protagonists.

Standard: Standard characters are more talented then most people. They have just enough ability to get into trouble. When lesser characters fall to monsters and threats to demonstrate to standard characters how dangerous the situation really is, standard characters follow, using their abilities to make a more effective stand against the threat.

Gritty: Gritty characters are average people who usually don't have any exceptional talents. In the face of supernatural danger they'll die unless they work together – or unless one of them makes great sacrifices for their comrades.

In most games, all characters use the same spread so that everyone has equal importance in the story. If the GM and group wish, however, they don't need to play this way. They can rotate a single Heroic character through different players while the rest play Gritty assistants, or develop other play models to experiment with new stories.

Persona and Being

Persona

Use a one word descriptor to assign a Persona type – the character's public face. This denotes the type of person the character appears to be.

Examples: Authoritarian, Bully, Cynic, Diplomat, Eccentric, Gallant, Hedonist, Politico, Pragmatist, Saint, Schemer, Vassal.

The player may invent it, or choose it from a list of GM-created options. A character is good at acting in accord with her Persona; she and gains +1 die to Social rolls when her behavior matches what you'd expect from her Persona type. If the character doesn't act in accord with her Persona *or* Being she suffers a –1 penalty to associated Social rolls. Neither her exterior façade nor her true feelings match her actions, so she isn't as presentable as usual.

Being

Being describes who the character truly is, beneath her public Persona. First, invent a one word descriptor using the same guidelines as for the Persona. (A character can have a Persona that's the same as her Being, indicating an unusually forthright personality).

Next, assign that descriptor a Strength of Being: a condition that, when met, inspires the character, refueling her emotional energies and sense of purpose. The character recovers a Will point whenever he meets that condition. Work with the GM here; these situations shouldn't come up more than once or twice a session unless the player is exceptionally resourceful.

Example: Joanna is a Vassal (that is, it's her Being type). Her Strength of Being comes from helping her chosen "liege" at the expense of her personal wants. She recovers a Will point in these situations.

Finally, assign a Weakness of Being. This is a situation where the character's Being gets the better of her. She finds it difficult to resist the impulses inspired by this vulnerability. The character suffers a –1 penalty to dice rolls to resist acting on her Weakness of Being. She can't spend Will points to oppose these impulses either. These situations usually only come about in cases of supernatural compulsion or extreme stress, but the player should always consider the character's weakness in everyday situations.

Example: Joanna's Weakness of Being is that she feels compelled to obey her liege regardless of the right or wrong of it. When a demon takes her master's form and uses a mind control power she cannot spend a point of Will to shake off control. She rolls to resist the power at –1 die.

Emotional Traits

The Emotional Traits are Prudence, Passion and Stoicism. They determine the character's basic emotional qualities. Unintelligent creatures do not have these traits.

Characters begin with 1 rank in each trait. Divide the following additional ranks among them according to character spread:

Heroic: 8 ranks; 6 per trait maximum

Standard: 7 ranks; 5 per trait maximum

Gritty: 6 ranks; 4 per trait maximum.

Passion

Passion is a character's motivation: his desire to go out and engage the world. Passionate people are capable of amazing zeal (which is why Passion determines the character's basic Will score). Make Passion checks to guide decisions about whether or not to act in situations where the character would be rewarded, but the effort would be significant.

Example: *Joanna's been up for 36 hours straight studying Argent's astrological charts. She wants to find an auspicious time for her ally's magical working. But on further examination, his chart reveals something sinister, but it would take another 12 hours of intense study to uncover. Her other option is to take a look later, but it looks like the best time for Argent's*

ritual is a mere day from now. Her player makes a Passion check to see if she would soldier on or wait until she's rested – and Argent has finished his magical working.

Characters also add Passion to Strength, Intelligence and Appearance dice pools when no particular Skill applies – but not if the character simply lacks a Skill that *would* apply.

Prudence

Prudence measures the character's ability to understand the consequences of her actions. A successful Prudence check means that the character has come to grips with her actions and beliefs. Characters normally make Prudence checks to stave off Ethos loss.

Characters add Prudence to Dexterity, Senses and Grace dice pools when no particular Skill applies.

Players may also make Prudence checks to help them decide whether or not their characters would accept the consequences for their actions in other situations.

Stoicism

Stoicism measures the character's self-control and basic emotional toughness. A character with a high Stoicism keeps his passions in check when the occasion requires it. Players normally make Stoicism checks to resist temptation, either to guide their roleplaying or to resist unusual compulsions.

Characters add Stoicism to Constitution, Wisdom and Charisma based rolls when no particular Skill applies – but again, not if the character simply lacks a Skill that would apply.

Calling for Emotional Trait Checks

Players use Emotional Traits to guide roleplaying, but there are occasions where the GM may ask for rolls. Supernatural compulsions might require checks to keep characters from violating their personal convictions. The GM can also suggest a check whenever a player seems confused about what her character might do or is looking at play with an excessively tactical point of view. Like real people, characters do not always act in their best interests. Emotional Traits reflect this.

Emotional Traits also come into play in situations where a character needs to make a very basic use of an Attribute and no listed Skill applies. For example, lifting a heavy object calls for a Strength + Passion roll. These situations should be rare, as the standard Skills apply in almost all cases.

Emotional Traits, Ethos and Will

Passion, Prudence and Stoicism determine a character's starting Ethos and Will, as follows:

Ethos: Prudence + Stoicism

Will: Equal to Passion

Also, characters cannot make Emotional Trait rolls with more dice than the character's Ethos score. Suppressed ranks are not lost, but cannot be rolled as dice until the character's Ethos increases again.

Ethos

A character's Ethos is a belief system that determines whether or not he's a good or bad person, by her own definition, others' standards, or the rules of the game setting. Only intelligent creatures (Intelligence 1 or more) have Ethoi. The GM usually decides on the range of available Ethoi.

The Ethos Scale

Every Ethos uses a 10 level scale that puts offenses against the Ethos into a hierarchy, ranging from rank 1 (the most heinous) to rank 10 (heights of ethical perfection that are impossible for most adherents to achieve). This scale should allow typical behavior to range between 6 and 8 on the scale. Each line lists one or two broad violations. Design an Ethos to make it difficult to reach a very high or low rank, but easy to float around the middle. Use the following sample Ethoi to help guide your own designs.

Humane Compassion

Humane Compassion is the most common Ethos in games with an objective morality. In other games, Ethoi like Human Compassion are still relatively common as the Ethos represents a basic, instinctual code of decency. Here's Humane Compassion's Ethos scale:

1. Torture and murder for pleasure.
2. Impassioned torture or physical abuse.
3. Premeditated murder.
4. Torture to extract information or intimidate.
5. Killing in self-defense.
6. Accidental killing. Intense verbal and emotional abuse.
7. Theft out of greed rather than necessity. Threatening harm.
8. Accidentally injuring another person.
9. Minor selfishness (greedy behavior, excess consumption).
10. Accidentally hurting another person's feelings.

Dark Enlightenment

The Ethos of Dark Enlightenment is devoted to hedonism and self-realization through pure egoism. According to the Ethos, everyone is responsible for their own fate and must either dominate others or be dominated. It is natural to manipulate and command other people for the adherent's wealthy and aggrandizement. Adherents should also meditate on their personal power and study occult forces. It has the following Ethos scale:

1. Risking your life for another.
2. Refusing to take advantage of the easily-manipulated.
3. Not meditating for an hour a day.
4. Refusing to study occult knowledge.
5. Risking imprisonment or other severe sanctions for another person's benefit.
6. Suppressing your ambitions and desires for the sake of love.
7. Risking your career or social standing for another person.
8. Being someone's inferior in a formal relationship (work, religion, etc.)
9. Delaying self-gratification.
10. Having true friends.

Starting Ethos

A character's starting Ethos is equal to his Prudence (see below) + Stoicism.

Losing and Regaining Ethos

If a character commits an Ethos violation at or below his current Ethos, he fails his ethical path, losing Ethos points and moving further down the scale. Roll Prudence; if the roll fails, the character loses a point of Ethos. If the roll is a critical failure, he also gains a rank of Madness.

If the character's Ethos drops to 0, it immediately recovers back to 1 – but the character earns a rank of Madness. In some games, dropping to 0 Ethos may have additional, supernatural effects.

Characters recover Ethos points by acting in greater accord with their beliefs. If the players and GM are satisfied with these efforts, the player can spend XP to buy up his character's Ethos. In some games, increasing Ethos above 10 is possible, making the character a living saint (or devil in the flesh!) with supernatural properties.

Changing Ethos

In games with multiple Ethoi it might (at the GM's discretion) be possible to change from one Ethos to another. There are two ways to accomplish this:

Degradation: The character learns the new Ethos while reducing his old Ethos to 0 with various violations (use the usual rules and apply their consequences). Instead of moving back up to 1 in his old Ethos he gains 1 point in the new one. By descending to the point of madness, the character's psyche breaks down; he finds refuge in the new Ethos.

Transcendence: The character increases his Ethos to 10 while learning the new Ethos. Instead of trying to maintain this enlightened state, he can switch to a new Ethos, which he begins following with 1 point – he loses all points in the old Ethos. He becomes broadminded enough to switch to another moral path.

Will

All characters have a Will score equal to their Passion. It represents determination and overall strength of purpose.

Characters have a permanent Will *rank* and fluctuating Will *points*. The character's points can never rise higher than her permanent ranks. Characters begin with a number of points equal to their ranks. Bonus Traits and XP always increase Will ranks.

Spend temporary Will on vital tasks: matters of survival and compelling principle. This can have the following effects:

- Spending a point of Will on a task adds an automatic success to the character's roll.
- Spending a point of Will negates all wound penalties for a turn.

Characters can sometimes spend Will to resist supernatural compulsions, either temporarily or permanently. The exact effects depend on the situation.

Characters can only spend one point of Will per turn. They regain a point of temporary Will in the following situations:

- At the beginning of any game session that didn't end on a cliffhanger.
- After 24 hours, provided the character's rested for five to eight hours.
- Whenever events affirm the character's Strength of Being

Will ranks are never spent or lost, even if the character's Passion drops. Characters make permanent Will rolls to resist compulsions, stave off fear and horror, and otherwise resist unwanted mental influence.

Madness

Characters begin with a Madness score of 0. They gain Madness ranks after they encounter disturbing events or their Ethos fails to guide them in a difficult situation. See Madness in Chapter Three for more information.

Attributes

Attributes define a character’s untrained physical, mental and social capabilities – how strong he is, or how witty, for instance. The possible scores of these Attributes range from 0 to infinity, but human beings have a more restricted range. The normal range is:

1 Deficient

2 Low average

3 High average

4 Exceptional

5 Maximum typical human

6 Legendary human (the greatest genius, athlete or demagogue of an age) – but beyond normal human potential

7+ Always beyond human potential

It is possible for a nonhuman creature to have a score of "none". A score of "none" is not the same as a score of "0". A score of "none" means that the creature does not possess the Attribute at all and instead, has an alternate, predetermined dice pool for any checks or rolls this might affect.

Attribute loss happens to human characters on occasion. It can have serious consequences. A character with a Constitution of 0 is dead. A 0 in any other score means the character is helpless and cannot move. Keeping track of negative Attribute ranks is never necessary. A character’s Attribute score can’t drop below 0.

There are three Attribute categories: Physical, Mental and Social. Prioritize these into primary, secondary and tertiary categories. Each Attribute begins with 1 rank. Add more ranks based on your priorities according to your character spread. This also determines the character’s maximum starting score in a given Attribute.

Heroic: Primary 8, Secondary 5, Tertiary 3 – maximum 6

Standard: Primary 7, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3 – maximum 5

Gritty: Primary 5, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3 – maximum 4

Physical Attributes

Strength (Str)

Strength is the ability to exert physical force with one’s own body. Any creature that can physically manipulate other objects has at least 1 rank of Strength.

A creature with no Strength score can't exert force, usually because it has no physical body or because it doesn't move. The creature automatically fails Strength checks. If the creature can attack, it applies its Dexterity modifier to its base attack instead of a Strength modifier.

Strength adds to damage dice pools for unarmed attacks, melee weapons and thrown weapons.

Dexterity (Dex)

Dexterity measures quick movement, agility and physical reaction time. Any creature that can move has at least 1 rank of Dexterity.

A creature with no Dexterity score can't move. If it can act, it applies its Senses score to initiative checks instead of its Dexterity. The creature fails all Dexterity-based dice rolls.

Constitution (Con)

Constitution measures a character’s health and physical toughness. Any living creature has at least 1 rank of Constitution.

A creature with no Constitution has no body or no metabolism and is not affected by anything that relies on living processes.

Your character’s Toughness score is based on your Constitution. Your Stun Toughness is based on your entire Constitution, while your Health Toughness is 50% of your Con, rounded up.

Mental Attributes

Intelligence (Int)

Any creature that can think, learn, or remember has at least 1 rank of Intelligence. Intelligence encompasses general problem solving ability and memory.

A creature with no Intelligence score is an automaton, operating on simple instincts or programmed instructions. It is immune to all mind-influencing effects) and automatically fails Intelligence-based dice rolls.

Senses (Sen)

Any creature that can perceive its environment in any fashion has at least 1 rank of Senses. Senses represent sight, hearing and even the more exotic perceptual powers of nonhumans.

Wisdom (Wis)

Anything capable of intuitive judgment has at least 1 rank of Wisdom, as Wisdom covers nonlinear thinking and mental reaction time. Wisdom also covers the ability to understand emotions (as oppose to expressing them) to a degree. Anything without a Wisdom score also has no Charisma score, and vice versa. Such creatures cannot make intuitive leaps or create mental models of others to predict their behavior.

Social Attributes

Attractiveness (Att)

Anything with a humanlike form has at least 1 rank of Attractiveness. Attractiveness not only measures the character's beauty, but his ability to use through behavior, dress and other preparations for social effect.

Grace (Gra)

Grace measures interpersonal Skills and the ability to communicate with others. Anything capable of communicating with others outside of rote statements and displays has at least 1 rank of Grace.

Charisma (Cha)

Charisma equates to force of personality and the ability to persuade, comfort or otherwise influence others' actions through means other than intellectual argument. Any creature capable of telling the difference between itself and things that are not itself has at least 1 rank of Charisma.

Skills

Skills represent practiced abilities, gained through formal teaching, practical experience and a combination of the two. The scores of each Skill range from 0 to infinity, but most humans are stuck within a limited range of ability. The standard scale is:

1 Basic Training

2 Amateur

3 Professional

4 Elite

5 Master

6 Singular genius for the Skill, but usually beyond human ability.

7+ Inhuman Skill.

It is possible for a creature to have a score of "none". A score of "none" is not the same as a score of "0". A score of "none" means that the creature does not possess the Skill at all and uses instinctual means (with a predetermined dice pool) to perform any related tasks. This is common in animals, who often have dice pools specific to specialized tasks that don't properly fit standard Skill categories.

A character's Skill rank can't drop below 0. Attacks and threats almost never reduce Skill ranks.

Like Attributes, Skills fall into three categories. Intuitive Informal Skills, practiced Formal Skills and dedicated Specialized Skills. Skills begin at 0 ranks each. Prioritize Skills into primary, secondary and tertiary categories. Again, your character creation spread determines how many ranks you have to divide between Skills in each category as well as how high they can rise at this phase of character creation. (In play, they can rise higher.)

Heroic: 15 primary, 10 secondary, 7 tertiary – maximum 4

Standard: 12 primary, 8 secondary, 6 tertiary – maximum 3

Gritty: 8 primary, 6 secondary, 4, tertiary – maximum 2

Informal Skills

- Athletics – jumping swimming, climbing and other physical feats.
- Bluff – deceiving others.
- Diplomacy – changing people's attitudes.
- Dodge – avoiding physical danger.
- Gather Information – scouring an area for gossip and other information.
- Intimidate – influence through threats.
- Trickery – gambling, sleight of hand and other dodgy pursuits.
- Leadership – commanding others.
- Listen/Spot – detecting danger and detail with the named senses.
- Unarmed Combat – martial arts or freestyle brawling.

Formal Skills

- Craft – creating objects and substances, even works of art.
- Concentration – meditation and mental discipline.
- Drive – driving a car.
- Firearms – using pistols and long arms.

- Melee Weapons – swords, clubs, knives and other close combat tools.
- Perform – acting singing and other performing arts.
- Search – inspecting people and objects for hidden things.
- Sense Motive – uncovering secret agendas and deceptions.
- Stealth – moving silently and hiding.
- Survival – moving and living in hostile territory.

Specialized Skills

- Computer Use – hacking, programming and other tasks.
- Disable Device – compromising locks and security systems.
- Disguise – the Skills of a makeup artist or spy.
- Investigate – Forensics and police investigation Skills.
- Knowledge – a number of academic fields, including the occult. Each type is a separate Skill.
- Pilot – boats, planes and other unusual vehicles. Each type is a separate Skill.
- Profession – a number of specialized career Skills. Each type is a separate Skill.
- Repair – fixing damaged machines and electronics.
- Research – searching for and interpreting information from libraries and databases.
- Treat Injury – practical medical knowledge.

Toughness, Stun and Health

Toughness, Stun Points and Health Points measure a character's resistance to injury. Normal human characters begin with 8 Stun Points and 8 Health Points each.

Stun Points

Stun Point injuries come from blunt force and other sources of injury that don't usually cause immediate bleeding or trauma.

Characters suffering Stun damage take a penalty on actions equal to 1 less than the total damage sustained (so characters who've only taken 1 Stun damage suffer no penalty). Characters who've sustained 8 Stun damage cannot move or act unless they spend 1 point of Will per turn to stay active. Spending Will for this purpose also removes wound penalties for the turn.

Characters reduce their movement per turn by three feet x their worst current wound penalty.

Once a character takes more Stun damage than his Stun Points, the excess becomes Health Point damage.

Health Points

Characters suffering Health damage take a penalty on actions equal to 1 less than the total damage sustained (so characters who've only taken 1 Health damage suffer no penalty). Characters who've sustained 8 Health damage cannot move or act unless they spend 1 point of Will per turn to stay active. Spending Will for this purpose also removes wound penalties for the turn. If the character also suffers Stun damage penalties, only apply the worst penalty of the two. Characters who've sustained 8 Health damage cannot move or act unless they spend 1 point of Will per turn to stay active. Spending Will also removes wound penalties for the turn.

Characters reduce their movement per turn by three feet x their worst current wound penalty.

Characters who suffer a 9th point of Health damage will die unless they get medical attention by the end of the scene. Characters who suffer 10 or more points of Health damage die instantly.

Toughness

Characters have a Toughness score based on Constitution:

Con	Stun* Toughness	Health Toughness
1	1	0
2	2	1
3	3	1
4	4	2
5	5	2
6	6	3

**Applies even when Stun damage has transferred to Health Points*

Subtract the appropriate Toughness score from incoming damage dice before rolling them. Treat any result of less than 1 as 1 *unless* the character has twice as much Toughness as the unmodified number of damage dice.

Roll the final total as a pool. Subtract the results from the victim's Stun or Health Points. Armor and certain supernatural powers enhance a character's effective Toughness.

Options: In gritty games, the GM might wish to remove Health Toughness. In heroic games, the GM might apply Stun Toughness to Health damage as well, leading to characters who can take a few more bullets and stab wounds before falling. Apply the same option to all PCs in the game.

Vulnerabilities

Some supernatural characters have vulnerabilities to certain substances and situations, such as holy water, silver or cold iron. These have the following effects:

- The threat always inflicts Health Point damage.
- Unless specifically noted, he character's Toughness does not apply to damage from the threat.
- It is difficult to heal, though the exact difficulty depends on the supernatural creature and type of damage.

Bonus Traits

Polish off your character with Bonus Traits. Spend traits to increase abilities or add new aspects to the character. You may not save Bonus Traits for later in the game without the GM's permission. Start with a number of traits based on the character's creation spread:

Heroic: 24

Standard: 18

Gritty: 12

Use them to enhance the character at the following cost in traits:

Emotional Traits: 4 per rank; cannot be increased higher than normal creation spread maximums.

Will: 2 per rank; cannot be increased higher than 10.

Attributes: 6 per rank; cannot be increased higher than normal creation spread maximums.

Skills: 3 per rank; can be increased as high as 5.

Background Traits: 2 per rank; can be bought to 5 ranks.

You should save some Bonus Traits for Background Traits, as they're the only way that starting characters can acquire them.

Background Traits

Background Traits are social ties, resources and special talents that don't fit anywhere else. Background Traits have two aspects: the base ranks and what they represent, and cost modifiers that stand for special circumstances.

Like other character traits, the maximum number of ranks allowed for beginning characters depends on their starting spread, as follows:

Heroic: 6

Standard: 5

Gritty: 4

Allies

This trait gives the character NPC associates who are willing to take risks to help her. Allies won't necessarily risk their lives or work without expecting some sort of reward (though some will). Allies are measured in terms of their competence compared to the character. A stronger ally has one or two ranks more in his best traits than the character; a weaker ally, one or two less.

Allies grow over time and always maintain their relative competence (weaker, equal or stronger) unless the player spends more points to increase their ability later. Allies who suffer abuse or unreasonable neglect at the hands of characters do leave. If allies die or drift away, new NPCs won't come to replace them.

Trait Costs

- Each weaker ally: 1
- Each equal ally: 2
- Each stronger ally: 3
- One ally helps without expecting a reward: +1
- One ally will risk his life for the character: +2

Counselor

Your counselor is an NPC capable of providing useful advice. She might be a teacher, a political advisor or a senior executive who regards your character with affection – or at least sees the value in an alliance. The counselor doesn't need material compensation but isn't a robot; she'll react to inconsiderate characters with disdain, reducing the value of this Background Trait.

The Counselor Trait's value is based on how easy it is to consult the NPC at any given time. The Counselor's attitude, resources and ability modify this total.

Trait Costs

- Counselor is difficult to reach (arrangements usually delay meetings at least a game session): 1
- Counselor can be reached regularly (usually once per session at most): 2
- Counselor is close at hand (can be consulted casually and spontaneously): 3
- Counselor is a rare genius in his/her field: +1
- Counselor will take risks to help the character: +2
- Counselor is wealthy or influential: +2

Famous

Famous measure's the character's celebrity status. It's either narrow or broad. Broadly famous characters are known to everyone in the area. Narrowly famous characters are only known by members of a specific community, such as organized crime or the art world. You can purchase narrow fame more than once, indicating that you're known to multiple communities.

With the advent of the Internet, "local" and "regional" designations can also refer to web presence. A local web presence indicates fame on a few busy websites; regional fame covers a large number of sites or one extremely popular site.

Characters add Famous ranks to Social rolls in situations where it would help them influence others.

Trait Costs

- Narrow, local fame: 1
- Broad local fame: 2
- Narrow regional fame: 2
- Broad regional fame: 3
- Narrow nationwide fame: 3
- Broad nationwide fame: 4
- Narrow international fame: 5

Focus

A focus gives your character more competence within a narrow subset of one of your Skills. This adds +1 to dice pools that involve the focus. Define each focus yourself by using a one to three word description that encapsulates a small proportion of what each Skill can do. You may give each Skill up to three different foci; they never stack with each other.

Examples: Listening for People (Listen/Spot), Kicking (Unarmed Combat), Knife Fighting (Melee Weapons), Shadowing Others (Stealth), Defusing Bombs (Profession: Demolitions), Deciphering Occult Symbols (Research)

Trait Costs

- Each Focus: 1

Languages

Characters can speak, read and write up to three languages at no special cost as long as it fits their background. After that, this Background Trait allows linguists to learn new individual languages or entire groups of closely related languages. Native fluency – the ability to speak, read and write a language as well as someone born to it – is an extra feature.

Trait Costs

- Each additional language: 1
- Each additional language group: 3
- Native fluency in one language: +1

Network

The Network Trait is a group of contacts that won't risk their necks for the character but will pass along information and introduce characters to other NPCs in exchange for compensation. Each network has a particular focus, such as smuggling, Freemasonry or high society. The trait's power is measured by the side of the region it covers.

With the advent of the Internet, "local" and "regional" designations can also refer to web presence. A local Internet network represents a single online communities; a regional network covers multiple, overlapping communities.

Trait Costs

- One area of coverage: 1
- One city of coverage: 2
- One region of coverage: 4
- National coverage: 5

Organization

Characters with an organization can direct some or all of the affairs of an existing social network, bureaucracy or faction, or have a group of their own that is capable of significantly influencing affairs within its purview. Each organization is a separate trait. Examples include: Cult, Business, Government, Military, Police, Union, University, Security, Intelligence Community.

Some organizations are more powerful than others. Significant organizations (major city governments, police) cost more Background Traits. Major organizations

(militaries, intelligence agencies, certain corporations) are even more expensive, and GMs should consider their inclusion carefully. Additionally, the basic Background Trait assumes only local influence. A wider reach is also more expensive.

You need to define the nature of your involvement in the organization. Your character is not immune to any consequences that might arise from subverting an organization, so she must use her access carefully.

Trait Costs

- Special access (can look at records, use simple on-site equipment): 1
- Minor influence: 2
- Significant influence: 3
- Major influence: 4
- Nearly total control: 5
- Regional reach: +1
- National reach: +2
- Significant organization: +1
- Major organization: +2

Wealth

Unless you decide otherwise, your character has just enough money to get by. She has a shabby country house or a tiny apartment and might be a few payments behind on a worn out vehicle. She doesn't have extra money for emergencies or anything that costs more than $100 a month. The Wealth Background Trait represents additional money and assets. Players must explain the source of any additional wealth. Events over the course of the game can risk the character's fortune.

Trait Costs

- Spending money ($250 a month to spend; a well maintained apartment/bungalow and economy vehicle): 1
- Modest earnings ($500 a month to spend; house or condo and a new vehicle): 2
- Comfortable ($1000 a month to spend; a Western upper middle class lifestyle or a wealthy bohemian): 3
- Millionaire ($10,000 a month to spend; a large house or expensive condo, multiple luxury vehicles and other investments): 4
- Multimillionaire ($50,000 a month to spend; a mansion and secondary properties as well as an extensive investment portfolio): 5
- Billionaire ($250,000 a month to spend; multiple assets, investments and wealth make you a public figure by default): 6

XP and Advancement

Experience Points (XP) drive a character's game trait advancement. The GM determines the rate of advancement. Here are some suggested per-session XP award guidelines:

Basic award: 1-2

A major event in the story occurred: +1-2

An overall stronger session than usual: +1-2

End of the campaign chapter: +1-2

Players entertain each other as well as themselves: +1-2

Strong character portrayal: +1-2

GMs can assign different awards to different players based on performance or give the same amount of XP to everybody. Rewarding everyone for one person's performance often improves play just as effectively as more unequal, competitive schemes. The GM can also leave XP awards to player consensus. You can even award accumulated XP once per campaign chapter (so that characters improve in single, dramatic strokes instead of slow, gradual steps.

Spending XP

Each character trait rank has an XP cost. The base cost is the rank the player wants to increase to. The character must have the previous rank in the trait and pays separately for each. For example, if Argent wants to increase his Unarmed Combat Skill from 2 to 3, the base cost is 3. The base cost for his previous rank is 2. Multiply this cost by a number determined by the type of trait as follows:

Emotional Traits: x 4; maximum 5, 6 for heroic characters.

Will: x 2; cannot be increased higher than 10.

Attributes: x 6; maximum 5, 6 for heroic characters.

Skills: x3; maximum 5, 6 for heroic characters.

Background Traits: x2; maximum 5, 6 for heroic characters.

Thus, Argent would pay 6 XP for the second rank of Unarmed Combat and 9 XP for the third. If Argent had to use XP to learn Unarmed Combat from the very beginning (as opposed to getting head start with Bonus Traits, the total cost to rank 3 would be 18 XP: 3 + 6 + 9.

If a player wants to select or improve a trait that especially fits the character's concept or the needs of the game, the GM can decrease its cost by reducing the trait type multiplier by 1. If Argent was the group's brawler and made boxing a major part of his life (including game sessions spent training or at amateur bouts, his third rank in Unarmed Combat might only cost 6 XP (3 x 2 instead of 3 x 3).

Task Resolution Basics

Everyday tasks don’t require game mechanics of any kind. Task resolution systems apply to any situation that not only might fail, but whose success or failure is important to the story.

Dice Pools

Players compose characters’ dice pools based on their traits. A dice pool is a number that represents how many 10-sided dice (d10s) the player rolls when her character attempts a particular task. Whenever a Skill is involved, the dice pool is equal to the Skill and one appropriate Attribute. If no Skill applies to a task, the pool might be an Attribute + an Emotional Trait. Occasionally, single traits (Will, Emotional Traits) are used to calculate dice pools as well.

Success, Failure and Critical Results

When you roll a dice pool, count the results of each die separately. A result of 1 *might* be a critical failure. A result of 2—6 is a failure. A result of 7—9 is a success and a result of 10 indicates two successes.

Count the number of successes. If these successes meet or exceed the minimum number of required successes (the Difficulty or opposing roll) the character succeeds at whatever she was attempting. If there aren’t enough successes, the attempt fails.

If the player does not roll *any* successes and one or more 1s, the character suffers a critical failure. Critical failures result in an accident or complication that hinders the character or her allies. The GM determines the exact result. Options include:

- The character wastes time recovering from the accident – a lost turn during combat, or a longer period cleaning up a mess of fixing accidental damage.
- The character suffers embarrassment.
- The character suffers an injury (minor, unless he’s playing with explosives or other very dangerous things).
- The character suffers an additional complication – she drops something during a search that alerts a guard or damages the boat she’s steering.

Most critical failures are mere nuisances but they tend to be more dangerous when they spring from inherently dangerous situations.

Modifiers, Difficulties and Opposed Pools

Dice successes have to meet or exceed a Difficulty number that normally ranges from 1—5, though some very difficult tasks might require players to roll 6 or more successes. The GM normally sets a static number or rolls. In other situations, the GM or an opposing player rolls a dice pool whose successes become the number to beat. Regardless of the opposed result, the player still needs to roll at least 1 success to accomplish the task.

In some situations (especially combat) the success threshold is important. This is the number by which your roll met or exceeded the requisite difficulty. For example, if you need at least 3 successes, scoring 5 would result in a success threshold of 3.

Favorable and adverse conditions create dice pool modifiers. Favorable conditions add dice to the pool; bad conditions subtract them. These modifiers normally range from –1 (among the worst conditions) to +5 (among the best).

Zero or Negative Dice

Even if dice pool modifiers reduce a pool to 0 or less, a character sill has a faint hope of success. At 0 dice, roll 2 dice to attempt the task. For negative dice pools, add an additional die for each level of difference (so that –1 grants 3 dice, –2 grants 4 dice and so on). This is called a “faint hope” pool. If *every* die a faint hope pool succeeds, the character scores 1 success – no more. Otherwise, he fails. If one die also rolls a 10, the character scores 2 successes. If even *one* die rolls a 1, the character suffers a critical failure, even if other dice rolled 7 or higher.

You may not roll a higher faint hope pool than the task’s applicable Attribute (or other trait if no Attribute is involved) +1. If the faint hope pool would rise any higher, the character automatically fails. Faint hope only goes so far.

Additional Attempts

The GM determines whether a player can attempt a failed task again. This has been deliberately left to individual games because various scenarios may benefit from different decisions. There are four basic options:

- **No:** The obstacle cannot be overcome by that character.
- **Yes:** The character can try again as often as she wants.
- **Rising Confidence:** The character can try again. If she didn’t fail critically, she gains +1 die for each additional attempt until she succeeds or critically fails (which resets the modifier back to 0 dice). Use this when it’s important to accomplish the task, but time makes a difference.
- **Fading Hope:** The character can try again, but at –1 die for each additional attempt. Use this when the story doesn’t hinge on the task’s success, but the character might win a marginal extra benefit.

Cooperation

In some cases, characters may cooperate on a task. All participants’ players roll individual dice pools and combine their total successes.

Time

Opening the Dark uses the following units of time:

Story Time: Minutes, seconds, hours – these represent time in the story, not time around the table playing.

Turn: A few seconds in length, a turn is the time it takes to exchange a blow or two in a fist fight or to shuffle and move about 30 feet in a dangerous situation.

Scene: A scene is a single uninterrupted series of events with a common theme. There's no hard and fast length for a scene, though most end when events move forward in time without the group playing them out. For example, one combat scene usually lasts from the first attack until one side is either defeated or negotiates an end to the violence. Any powers or circumstances that last for the scene would end at that point.

Session: A game session runs from the start of roleplaying get-together to its end.

Chapter: A chapter is a major story arc that runs several sessions.

Campaign: A campaign is a series of interconnected chapters. Campaigns can have an indefinite length, though groups can agree to a set start and end date.

Skills and Multitasking Over Time

Various tasks have different time intervals. A strike with a weapon only takes a turn, while engine repair or occult study could take an hour or more. This interval is the time required to attempt the task once.

In some cases, it's possible to perform more than one task during a given interval. Subtract 2 dice from the first dice roll during the interval and an additional 2 dice for each additional action during the interval. If this would reduce a character's basic dice pool (before other modifiers) to 0, the action cannot be attempted.

Safe Success, Automatic Success and Will

If your character performs a task in an unhurried fashion without any serious distractions or stress, you may call for automatic successes. Your character's dice pool needs to be quadruple (after adjustments for conditions) the successes you wish to score.

Safe Success is impossible in combat or other stressful or physically vigorous conditions. In these cases you must roll, though you can always spend a Will point to get a single automatic success in the most stressful situations. Add this success to any garnered by the dice roll itself. This single automatic success might not bump up successes to match the task's Difficulty, so it isn't a certain thing. You cannot stack Safe Successes with Will expenditures. Will represents grace under pressure; Safe Success represents consistency under calm conditions.

You may not spend more than 1 Will point per turn. If you use Will for another task (to avoid damage penalties or activate a supernatural power, for example) you cannot spend an additional point in the same turn to guarantee an automatic success.

Optional Systems

Exploding Dice

A roll of 10 on a die normally grants two successes. Optionally, you may allow each 10 to add a bonus die to the pool. If *these* dice roll 10, add another die still, and so on, ensuring that characters of any Skill can, given enough luck, succeed at the most difficult tasks. On the other hand, the standard rule always provides extra successes, while this option has a high chance of providing no extra benefit.

Extended Tasks

The basic rules resolve most tasks with a single roll but the GM may want players to roll multiple times. This can add dramatic tension or provide situations where the number of successes sets a specific result (damage, number of targets, etc.).

If you use this system divide a task into sub-intervals and set a high Difficulty – 8, 10, 15 or even more, depending on how long and difficult you want the task to be. The character succeeds when the player accumulates enough successes over several rolls to meet the Difficulty. If the player scores a critical failure, he loses all accumulated successes.

Floating Difficulty

Some people may prefer to vary the chance of success for each die. This gives GMs more ways to modify dice pools. Here's how you do it:

Instead of succeeding on a 7 or higher and meeting a certain number of successes, add the Difficulty to 6 to determine the minimum die roll required. If this number is higher than 9, either subtract the difference from the character's dice pool or demand an additional success.

Opposed rolls always require a die result of 6 or higher from both participants unless they are competing at a task that is more difficult.

Good and bad conditions modify dice or the required die roll at the GM's discretion, converting back and forth on a 1 for 1 basis. Dice penalties raise the required number on the die; bonuses lower it. Adjustments that drop the required die number below 3 always convert the excess to bonus dice; above 9, excess adjustments always subtract dice or add required successes.

Example: *Argent's player makes a difficult Research roll. In the normal rules, this requires 3 successes. Using this system, Argent's player only needs 1 success, but can only get it by rolling a 9 or higher.*

Using Attributes

Players rarely roll Attributes in a dice pool without adding an additional trait. If no Skill exists to handle a task, add Emotional Traits to Attributes using the following associations:

Passion: Strength, Intelligence and Appearance
Prudence: Dexterity, Senses and Grace
Stoicism: Constitution, Wisdom and Charisma
Remember: Only do this is no Skill applies to the task – not if the character merely lacks the applicable Skill. Here are sample tasks for such situations.

Physical Attributes

Strength (Str)

Feats of Strength (Str + Passion): Roll Strength + Passion at a modifier based on what the character is trying to accomplish:

Roll Modifier	Feat	Lift (pounds)
+2	Break a green stick	50
+1	Chop down a tree	100
0	Break down a wooden door	200
–1	Throw a manhole cover	400
–2	Rip a door out of a	600

	metal frame.	
–3	Overturn a sedan	800
–4	Throw an van’s engine block	1000
–5	Pull a cement truck	1250
–6	Uproot a foot-thick tree	1500
–7	Smash granite blocks	2000
–8	Throw a small car	3000
–9	Dent a vault door	4000
–10	Use a foot-thick tree as a melee weapon	5000

Dexterity (Dex)

Feats of Dexterity (Dex + Prudence): Roll Dexterity + Prudence at a modifier based on what the character is trying to accomplish:

Roll Modifier	Feat
+2	Tie a secure knot
+1	Sewing
0	Assemble electronics in a factory
– 1	Juggle three balls
–2	Catch a fly
–3	Juggle eight balls

–4	One handed handstand
–5	Write on a grain of rice
–6	Choose how a tumbling die falls.
–7	Handstand on two index fingers
–8	Sprint backwards
–9	Juggle three housecats
–10	Catch a bullet

Constitution (Con)

Endurance (Con + Stoicism): Roll to avoid 1 automatic point of Stun damage after 24 hours without sleeping. Make this roll at a –2 penalty per additional day without rest and at an additional –1 if the day involved heavy exertion. Stun damage from lack of sleep does not heal until the character sleeps for at least four hours.

GMs may also call for such rolls for every *hour* a character constantly exerts himself by running or performing other continuous, strenuous physical activity. In this case, accumulated Stun damage doesn't heal until the character's had at least an hour of rest (though not necessarily sleep).

Mental Attributes

Intelligence (Int)

General Knowledge (Int + Passion): One to three times per scene, make a roll to see if a character knows a helpful bit of trivia that doesn't always require a specific Knowledge Skill. There's normally no penalty, as this is often an avenue by which the GM can introduce interesting bits of information. In these situations use the Rising Confidence rule (p. **XX**), since a character is meant to take the hint, but the exact character and time are in question.

Senses (Sen)

Blind Action (Sen + Prudence): Blind characters normally perform sight-based tasks at a –5 dice penalty and cannot attempt certain tasks (such as ranged attacks) at all. Roll Senses + Prudence at this penalty to focus perceptions; this takes a full turn of concentration. Each success reduces penalties to character's first action in the next turn by 1. If the action would automatically fail due to sightlessness, success allows the character to perform it at a –5 penalty instead. This does not apply in situations where blindness would make the task truly impossible, such as perceiving color.

Wisdom (Wis)

Intuition (Wis + Stoicism): Once per scene, players may make this roll to assess the value of previously learned information. For instance, the character might determine whether a clue is central to their investigation or concerns a secondary matter. The accuracy of the assessment is based on the number of successes:

Successes	Result
1	“Warm” or “Cold” only.
2	Identify a definite “red herring” by the character’s standards.
3	How two or three pieces of information compare to one another.
4	A hint about the person behind a clue, or a sense of whether following it could be rewarding or dangerous.
5	Almost psychic (though still plausibly knowable without supernatural interference) detail about one piece of information.

Social Attributes

Attractiveness (Att)

Romance (Att + Passion): This roll covers all forms of intimate assignations, from one night stands to lengthy relationships. It does not represent relationships based on violence, intimidation, blackmail or commercial transactions (such as prostitution). Accordingly, your character needs to have a friendly relationship (see the Diplomacy skill – and use it to meet someone out of the blue) with anyone she wishes to woo. If you wish, apply the following steps:

Introductions: First of all, the recipient of the character’s affections needs to be open to the possibility of intimacy (though not necessarily consciously). The GM usually determines this for NPCs. *Both* characters roll Att + Passion dice pools and combine successes; the Difficulty is 5. In a polyamorous relationship, each participant in the group must reach this target with every other in succession.

Socially skilled characters find it easier to admit their own desires and express them freely. If there's a social taboo associated with the relationship (inter-ethnic intimacy in a racist society) or one of the characters has some longstanding sense of repression around it (a same sex relationship where on partner is in denial about his orientation), subtract dice from the pool. Particularly supportive environments add dice.

Successive attempts normally use the Rising Confidence rule, but not always; people often have trouble admitting their feelings for each other!

Maintenance: Subsequent rolls take place whenever a turning point or risk enters the relationship. This is a use of the Diplomacy skill where all participants have a friendly or helpful attitude toward each other. If relations drop below friendly, the romance is gone! It's time to rekindle the romance by returning to the Introductions phase, above.

Use this system to either manage relationships in the background of play, or to add uncertainty to romantic stories in play. This system can be especially helpful when it comes to guiding two players who want their characters to start a relationship but want a certain amount of tension and chaos instead of purely prearranged situations. In the latter case, use the dice rolls to guide the character's behavior. He might be after the right companion, but at a loss for words!

Grace (Gra)

Social Adaptation (Gra + Prudence): **Use this system when your character wants to blend in to a social situation such as a formal dinner, a house party in the inner city or an audience with a drug warlord. This does not represent the ability to enter the situation under false pretenses (that belongs to the Bluff and Disguise Skills) or improving your standing (that's Diplomacy) but covers what fork to use with the fish, mandatory epithets and how to avoid embarrassing yourself. Very successful or dismal results can mandate new rolls or modifiers to other Skills, however. This is left to the GM to decide.**

The Difficulty is 1; add or subtract dice based on the character's background and the social situation. A social-climbing member of the middle class might be able to muddle through a debutante ball at a mere –1 penalty, while a recently relocated Amazonian native suffers a –5. (It might be more, but the Amazonian is likely to be treated as a novelty).

Charisma (Cha)

Gossip (Cha + Stoicism): Unlike the Gather Information Skill, gossip doesn't require the character to make any special effort. Instead, the character is assumed to have a place in the social grapevine commensurate with how much others like him. If a piece of relevant gossip makes the

rounds, the GM rolls pools for each character. Characters who score more successes get the most detailed versions of events. Characters who constantly demonstrate contempt, ingratitude or a host of other unpleasant personality traits lose dice from their pools.

Using Skills

If a task is covered by a Skill, resolve actions with a dice pool composed of a relevant Attribute, an applicable Skill and (if suitable) a Focus Background Trait. If the character lacks the appropriate Skill she's limited to her Attribute and subject to the following restrictions, based in the Skill that would normally apply:

Informal Skill: Attribute only, no penalty.

Formal Skill: Attribute –1.

Specialized Skill: Task cannot be attempted or Attribute –2 (GM's choice).

The specific tasks below are only examples of what Skills and do, providing detailed systems whenever the group feels they're necessary. You can add any Attribute to any Skill to create a pool that applies to a specific situation. For instance, Con + Research might be applicable when the character wants to cram all night before an examination (or a meticulous magical ritual). He needs to stay up while absorbing all of the required information, so his health and study habits both come into play. There are 270 possible combinations, though admittedly, some are less likely than others. The tasks below include standard dice pools, but some situations (and clever descriptions) might change them.

Informal Skills

Informal Skills are often learned through ad hoc practice, though they can be mastered through formal training as well. Unskilled characters suffer no penalty when attempting informal Skills.

Athletics

Athletics covers general sports and gymnastics. Professional athletes usually specialize in one sport (and have the Attributes and Focus to match). This Skill does not include dance (though dancers often have Athletics ranks) and feats of raw strength or specialized manual dexterity.

The following tasks fall under the Athletics Skill.

Archery and Throwing

Roll (Dex + Athletics): Characters use the Athletics Skill to throw objects accurately and forcefully as well as use human-propelled ranged weapons like bows and altatls (though crossbows use the Firearms Skill). See **Violence, Danger and Madness** for details.

Balancing

Roll (Dex + Athletics): The character can walk on a precarious surface. A successful roll lets the character move at half his speed along the surface. A failure indicates that the character spends his turn keeping his balance and does not move. A failure by 2 or more indicates that the character falls. The difficulty varies with the conditions of the surface.

Narrow Surface	Difficulty*	Difficult Surface	*Difficulty*
7–12 in. wide	1	Uneven or angled	2
2–6 in. wide	2	Slippery surface	3
Less than 2 in. wide	4		

*Add +1 to the Difficulty if the narrow surface is slippery or angled; add +2 if it is both slippery and angled.

Being Attacked While Balancing: While balancing, the character has difficulty dodging; apply a penalty equal to the Difficulty of the balance.

Accelerated Movement: The character can try to cross a precarious surface more quickly than normal. The character can move his normal speed, but the character takes a –1 penalty on his Athletics roll. Running double speed imposes a –2 penalty.

Climbing

Roll (Str + Athletics): With each successful Athletics roll, the character can advance up, down, or across a slope or a wall or other steep incline (or even a ceiling with handholds).

A slope is considered to be any incline of less than 60 degrees; a wall is any incline of 60 degrees or steeper.

A failed Athletics roll indicates that the character makes no progress, and a roll that fails by 2 or more means that the character falls from whatever height she had already attained (unless the character is secured with some kind of harness or other equipment).

The Difficulty of the roll depends on the conditions of the climb. If the climb is less than 10 feet, reduce the Difficulty by 1.

Since the character can't move to avoid an attack, she cannot use the Dodge Skill.

Any time the character takes damage while climbing, make an Athletics roll against the Difficulty of the slope or wall. Failure means the character falls from his current height and sustains the appropriate falling damage.

Accelerated Climbing: A character can try to climb more quickly than normal. The character can move his full speed, but the character takes a –2 penalty on his Athletics roll.

Making Handholds and Footholds: A character can make handholds and footholds by pounding pitons into a wall. Doing so takes 1 minute per piton, and one piton is needed per 3 feet. As with any surface with handholds and footholds, a wall with pitons in it has a Difficulty of 1. In similar fashion, a climber with an ice axe or other proper implement can cut handholds or footholds in an ice wall.

Catching Yourself When Falling: It's practically impossible for a character to catch him or herself on a wall while falling. Make a Dex + Athletics roll (Difficulty equal to wall's Difficulty + 4) to do so. A slope is relatively easier to catch on (Difficulty equal to slope's Difficulty + 2).

Special: Someone using a rope can haul a character upward (or lower the character) by means of sheer strength. This is a feat of Strength, not a Climb check.

A character can take 1 while climbing, but can't take 3.

A character without climbing gear takes a –2 penalty on Athletics rolls. At the GM's discretion, certain kinds of climbing attempts might require only a rope or some other implement, or even just one's hands and feet, rather than a full set of climbing gear to avoid the penalty.

Difficulty	Example Wall or Surface or Task
0	A slope too steep to walk up.
1	A rope with a wall to brace against.
2	Any surface with adequate handholds and footholds (natural or artificial), such as a rough natural rock surface, a tree, or a chain-link fence. An unknotted rope. Pulling yourself up when dangling by your hands.
3	An uneven surface with just a few narrow handholds and footholds, such as a coarse masonry wall or a sheer cliff face with a few crevices and small toeholds.
4	A rough surface with no real handholds or footholds, such as a brick wall.

5	Overhang or ceiling with handholds but no footholds.
—	A perfectly smooth, flat, vertical surface can't be climbed.
–1*	Climbing inside an air duct or other location where one can brace against two opposite walls (reduces normal Difficulty by 1).
–1*	Climbing a corner where a character can brace against perpendicular walls (reduces normal Difficulty by 1).
+1*	Surface is slippery (increases normal Difficulty by 1).

*These modifiers are cumulative; use any that apply.

Jumping

Roll (Str+Athletics): The Difficulty and the distance the character can cover vary according to the type of jump the character is attempting.

The character's Athletics roll is modified by his speed. The Difficulties specified below assume a speed of 30 feet (the speed of a typical human). If the character's speed is less than 30 feet, she takes a penalty of –1 for every 10 feet of speed less than 30. If the character's speed is greater than 30 feet, she gains a bonus of +1 for every 10 feet over 30.

If the character has ranks in the Athletics Skill and succeeds on a roll, the character lands on his feet (when appropriate) and can move as far as the character's remaining movement allows. If the character attempts an Athletics roll untrained, the character lands prone unless she beats the Difficulty by 2 or more.

Distance moved by jumping is counted against maximum movement in a turn. A character can start a jump at the end of one turn and complete the jump at the beginning of your next turn.

Long Jump: This is a horizontal jump, made across a gap such as a chasm or stream. At the midpoint of the jump, the character attains a vertical height equal to one-quarter the horizontal distance. The Difficulty for the jump is equal to 1/5 the distance jumped (in feet). The Difficulties for long jumps of 5 to 20 feet are given in the table below. A character cannot jump a distance greater than his normal speed.

All Athletics Difficulties covered here assume that the character can move at least 20 feet in a straight line before attempting the jump. If this is not the case, the Difficulty for the jump is doubled.

Long Jump Distance	Difficulty[1]	Long Jump Distance	Difficulty[1]
5 feet	1	15 feet	3
10 feet	2	20 feet	4

1 Requires a 20-foot move. Without a 20-foot move, double the Difficulty.

If the character fails the roll by less than 2, she doesn't clear the distance, but can make a Reflex save (Difficulty 2) to grab the far edge of the gap. The character ends his movement grasping the far edge. If that leaves the character dangling over a chasm or gap, getting up requires an Athletics roll (Difficulty 2).

High Jump: This is a vertical leap, made to jump up to grasp something overhead, such as a tree limb or ledge. The Difficulty is the height in feet. This assumes that the character can move at least 20 feet in a straight line before attempting the jump. If this is not the case, the Difficulty for the jump is increased by 2.

Riding

Animals ill suited as mounts provide a –1 penalty on their rider's Athletics roll.

Roll (Dex + Athletics): Typical riding actions don't require rolls. A character can saddle, mount, ride, and dismount without a problem, provided he gets minimal instruction. Without informal instruction, make rolls at a -3 penalty. Some tasks, such as those undertaken in combat or other extreme circumstances, require rolls. In addition, attempting trick riding or asking the animal to perform an unusual technique also requires a roll.

Guide with Knees (Difficulty 1): The character can react instantly to guide his mount with his knees so that the character can use both hands in combat or to perform some other action. Make the roll at the start of the character's turn. If the character fails, she can only use one hand this turn because the character needs to use the other to control his mount.

Stay in Saddle (Difficulty 1): The character can react instantly to try to avoid falling when his mount rears or bolts unexpectedly or when the character takes damage.

Fight while Mounted (Difficulty 3): While in combat, the character can attempt to control a mount that is not trained in combat riding (see the Handle Animal Skill). If the character succeeds, she can attack while the mount moves. If the character fails, she can do nothing else that turn. If the character fails by more than 4, she loses control of the animal. For animals trained in combat riding, the character does not need to make this roll. Instead, the character can urge his mount to attack as well.

Cover (Difficulty 2): The character can react instantly to drop down and hang alongside his mount, using it as one-half cover. The character can't attack while using his mount as cover. If the character fails, she doesn't get the cover benefit.

Soft Fall (Difficulty 2): The character reacts instantly when she falls off a mount, such as when it is killed or when it falls, to try to avoid taking damage. If the character fails, she takes falling damage.

Leap (Difficulty 2): The character can get his mount to leap obstacles as part of its movement. Use the character's Athletics modifier or the mount's applicable dice pool (whichever is lower) to make the jump. The character makes an Athletics roll (Difficulty 2) to stay on the mount when it leaps.

Fast Mount or Dismount (Difficulty 3): The character can mount or dismount and perform other actions. This requires an Athletics roll at the standard multiple action penalty.

Special: If the character is riding bareback, she takes a –1 penalty on Athletics rolls.

Swimming

Roll (Str + Athletics): A successful Athletics roll allows a character to swim half the character's speed (normally 15 feet) per turn. Characters with at least one rank of Athletics may swim one quarter of this speed without making a roll unless they're in rough water. If the character fails, she makes no progress through the water. If the character fails by 5 or more, she goes underwater.

If the character is underwater (from failing an Athletics roll or because the character is swimming underwater intentionally), the character must hold his breath. A character can hold his breath for a number of turns equal to four times the character's Constitution score, but only if the character does nothing but move. If the character attacks or otherwise exerts himself, the amount of breath the character has remaining is reduced by 1 turn. After that period of time, the character must make a Constitution roll (Difficulty 1) every turn to continue holding his breath. Every three turns, the Difficulty of the roll increases by 1. If the character fails the roll she begins to drown.

The Difficulty for the Athletics roll depends on the water:

Water	*Difficulty*
Calm water	1
Rough water	2
Stormy water	3

Each hour that the character swims requires an Con + Stoicism Endurance roll.

Tumbling

Roll (Dex + Athletics): A character can land softly when she falls, tumble past opponents in combat, or tumble through opponents.

Land Softly: The character can make an Dex + Athletics roll when falling. Reduce the fall's damage dice by the number of successes.

Tumble through Opponents: With a successful Athletics roll (Difficulty 4), the character can roll, jump, or dive through areas occupied by opponents, moving over, under, or around them as if they weren't there. Failure means the character cannot pass.

Bluff

The Bluff Skill represents the experience of successful con artists, spies and other deceivers. A bluff is not the same thing as a lie. A bluff is a quick prevarication intended to distract, confuse, or mislead, generally only for the short term. A bluff is not intended to withstand long-term or careful scrutiny, but rather to momentarily deter an action or decision. Bluffs involve attitude and body language. Bluffs often include lies, but they usually aren't very sophisticated and aren't intended to deceive the target for more than a few moments.

A lie, on the other hand, is a simple misrepresentation of the facts. Body language and attitude aren't a big part of communication. The lie may be very sophisticated and well thought-out, and is intended to deceive a character at least until she discovers evidence to the contrary. A character should not make a Bluff roll every time she utters a lie.

Basic Bluffing

Roll (Gra + Bluff): A Bluff roll is opposed by the target's Sense Motive roll when trying to con or mislead. Favorable and unfavorable circumstances weigh heavily on the outcome of a bluff. Two circumstances can work against the character: The bluff is hard to believe, or the action that the bluff requires the target to take goes against the target's self-interest, nature, personality, or orders.

If it's important, the GM can distinguish between a bluff that fails because the target doesn't believe it and one that fails because it asks too much of the target. For instance, if the target gets a +2 bonus because the bluff demands something risky of the target, and the target's Sense Motive roll succeeds by 2 or less, then the target didn't so much see through the bluff as prove reluctant to go along with it. If the target's Sense Motive roll succeeds by 3 or more, he has seen through the bluff, and would have succeeded in doing so even if it had not placed any demand on him (that is, even without the +2 bonus).

A successful Bluff roll indicates that the target reacts as the character wishes, at least for a short time (usually 1 turn or less), or the target believes something that the character wants him or her to believe.

A bluff requires interaction between the character and the target. Targets unaware of the character can't be bluffed.

Example Circumstances	*Sense Motive Modifier*
The target wants to believe the character.	–1
The bluff is believable and doesn't affect the target much one way or the other.	+0
The bluff is a little hard to believe or puts the target at some kind of risk.	+1
The bluff is hard to believe or entails a large risk for the target.	+2
The bluff is way out there; it's almost too incredible to consider.	+3

Feinting and Diversions

Roll (Dex + Bluff): A character can also use Bluff to mislead an opponent in combat so that the opponent can't dodge the character's attack effectively. If the character succeeds, add half of his successes to the dice pool of the next attack the character makes against the bluffed enemy.

A character can use Bluff to help him or her hide. A successful Bluff roll gives the character the momentary diversion needed to attempt a Stealth roll while people are aware of the character. (See the Stealth Skill)

Innuendo

Roll (Cha + Bluff): A character can use Bluff to send and understand secret messages while appearing to be speaking about other things. The Difficulty for a basic message is 1. Complex messages or messages trying to communicate new information have Difficulties of 2 or 3. Both the sender and the receiver must make the roll for the secret message to be successfully relayed and understood.

Anyone listening in on a secret message can attempt a Sense Motive roll (Difficulty equal to the sender's Bluff roll result). If successful, the eavesdropper realizes that a secret message is contained in the communication. If the eavesdropper beats the Difficulty by 2 or more, she understands the secret message.

Whether trying to send or intercept a message, a failure by 2 or more points means that one side or the other misinterprets the message in some fashion.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the art of making friends, Despite its formal-sounding name it applies to biker bars as well as embassies. High rank in this skill belongs to someone who can make almost anyone feel at ease and ready to make personal connections. Diplomacy helps quell anger, solidify alliances and cool inflamed tempers. GMs may modify Diplomacy rolls based on a

character’s background. An embassy attaché is probably not going to make friends easily in an outlaw motorcycle club compound.

Basic Diplomacy

Roll (Att or Gra + Diplomacy): A character can change others’ attitudes with a successful roll (see the table below. In negotiations, participants roll opposed Diplomacy rolls to see who gains the advantage. Opposed rolls also resolve cases where two advocates or diplomats plead opposing cases before a third party.

Diplomacy can be used to influence a GM character’s attitude. The GM chooses the character’s initial attitude based on circumstances. Most of the time, the people the characters meet are indifferent toward them, but a specific situation may call for a different initial attitude. The Difficulties in the accompanying table show what it takes to change someone’s attitude with the use of the Diplomacy Skill. The character doesn’t declare a specific outcome she is trying for; instead, make the roll and compare the result to the following table.

Attitude	Means	Possible Actions
Hostile	Will take risks to hurt or avoid you	Attack, interfere, berate, flee
Unfriendly	Wishes you ill	Mislead, gossip, avoid, watch suspiciously, insult
Indifferent	Doesn’t much care	Act as socially expected
Friendly	Wishes you well	Chat, advise, offer limited help, advocate
Helpful	Will take	Protect, back up,

		risks to help you		heal, aid	
Initial Attitude	New Attitude				
	Host.	**Unf.**	**Indif.**	**Friend.**	**Help.**
Hostile	3 or less	4	5	6	7
Unfriendly	1 or less	2	3	4	5
Indifferent	—	0 or less	1	2	4
Friendly	—	—	0 or less	1	2

Bribery and Diplomacy

Offering money or another form of favor can, in the right situation, improve a character's chances with a Diplomacy Skill roll. Bribery allows a character to circumvent various official obstacles when a person in a position of trust or authority is willing to accept such an offering.

An illegal act, bribery requires two willing participants—one to offer a bribe and the other to accept it. When a character requires a bribe to render services, then a character's Diplomacy roll automatically fails if a bribe isn't attached to it. If a bribe isn't requires, a character can add a bribe to get a bonus on his Skill roll. This can backfire, as some characters will be insulted by a bribe offer (their attitude changes one step for the worse) and others will report the character to the proper authorities.

To bribe a character, make a Grace +Wealth Background Trait roll. Typical Difficulties are shown on below, but the GM may modify the Difficulty as she sees fit. If the character succeeds in the roll, she gains a +1 bonus on the Diplomacy roll. For every 2 points by which the character beats the Difficulty, increase the bonus by +1 (to a total maximum bonus of +5).

Bribe Target	Purchase Difficulty
Bouncer	1
Informant	2
Bureaucrat	3
Police officer (developed	4

world)

Dodge

Roll (Dex + Dodge): The Dodge Skill is used to avoid harm in combat and other situations that require a fusion of alertness and agility. See **Violence, Danger and Madness** for details.

Gather Information

Gather Information is the Skill of goal-oriented carousing, rumormongering (as opposed to just passively participating in a gossip network) and social investigation skills. Police officers, anthropologists and concierges all practice versions of this Skill, tailored to the communities they interact with.

Basic Information Gathering

Roll (Cha + Gather Information): By succeeding at a Skill roll (Difficulty 1) and spending 1d10/2 hours passing out money and buying drinks, a character can get a feel for the major news items in a neighborhood. This result assumes that no obvious reasons exist why information would be withheld. The higher the roll result, the better the information.

Information ranges from general to protected, and the cost (required Wealth) and Difficulty increases accordingly for the type of information the character seeks to gather, as given in the table below.

Type of Information	*Difficulty*	*Wealth rank*
General	1	1
Specific	2	2
Restricted	3	3
Protected	4	4

General information concerns local happenings, rumors, gossip, and the like. Specific information usually relates to a particular question. Restricted information includes facts that aren’t generally known and requires that the character locate someone who has access to such information. Protected information is even harder to come by and might involve some danger, either for the one asking the questions or the one providing the answer. There’s a chance that someone will take note of anyone asking about restricted or protected information.

Introductions

Roll (Gra + Gather Information): Characters also use Gather Information to arrange meetings with people they don't personally know. By locating and feting intermediaries for 1d10/2 hours (thus, the Wealth cost) she gets them to arrange introductions; the introduction normally takes place 1d10 days later and gives the character up to an hour of face to face access. If the character has an applicable Network, add +2 to her dice pool. The subject is normally indifferent to the character, though this can be changed with Diplomacy.

Person	*Difficulty*	*Wealth rank*
Common (Beat Cop)	1	1
Uncommon (MD w. Specific Specialty)	2	1
Rare (Homicide Detective)	3	2
Difficult (Local Mob Boss)	4	2
Very Difficult (Governor, Senator)	5	3
Unique (Federal Cabinet)	6	4
Same Day Meeting	+1	0
Meet in an Hour	+4	0
1 More Wealth Than Needed	-1	+1

Intimidate

Intimidate extracts information or favors with the threat of violence or blackmail. This can be explicit (in the form of direct threats to safety and social standing) or implicit (taking a menacing stance or obliquely referring to a blackmail topic). To make an implicit threat that outsiders wouldn't understand, use an indecipherable inside reference or succeed at a Bluff check to communicate through innuendo.

Basic Intimidation

Roll (Str or Cha + Intimidate): With a successful roll, a character can forcibly persuade another character to perform some task or behave in a certain way. A character's Intimidate roll is opposed by the target's Will roll.

If the character succeeds, she may treat the target as friendly for 10 minutes, but only for purposes of actions taken while in the character's presence. (That is, the target retains his normal attitude, but will chat, advise, offer limited help, or advocate on the character's behalf while intimidated.) Use Strength for the roll if the character's using physical bullying to persuade his victim. The target's wound penalties add dice to a character's Intimidate pool.

There are limits to what a successful Intimidate roll can do. The character can't force someone to obey his every command or do something that endangers that person's life. If the character fails by more than 2, the target may actually do the opposite of what the character wishes.

Blackmail and Extortion

Roll (Gra + Intimidate): With a successful roll, a character can take money from the target with threats, harassment or unpleasant, public revelations. Unless the NPC target has a motive that dictates a specific response, he opposes the character's roll with a Will roll. Modify the character's dice pool based on the mount of money she wants:

Money	Dice Modifier
Trivial ($50 or less)	+2
Target's Wealth –3 in monthly spending money	+1
Target's Wealth –2 in monthly spending money.	0
Target's Wealth –1 in monthly spending money	–1
Target's monthly spending money	–2

Trickery

Trickery covers the kinds of tasks that small time hoods hone to perfection: card sharking, shell games and other cons. Outside of the underworld, stage magicians learn the card tricks and confidence games necessary to perform Skill tasks. Despite the name, the Trickery Skill doesn't always involve illegal activities, though a pool or card shark's behavior is rarely considered to be honorable.

Gambling

Roll (Int + Trickery): To join or start a game, a character must first pay a stake. The total pot is usually the stake multiplied by the number of players. The character sets the purchase Difficulty of the stake if she starts the game,

or the GM sets it if the character joins a game. The character must meet the stakes. Winnings are not enough to affect his Wealth bonus unless they're 10 times the character's monthly allowance, in which case the character gains a rank of Wealth within 2d10 days, as long as he doesn't blow more of his cash winnings than the new Wealth rank's monthly spending allowance.

The character's Trickery roll is opposed by the Trickery rolls of all other participants in the game. If playing at a casino, the GM assigns its pool, just as she would for an NPC. If there are many characters participating, the GM can opt to make a single roll for all of them, using the highest Gamble Skill modifier among them and adding a +2 bonus to the roll.

If you the character cheats, add +2 to his dice pool, but be warned that failing by 2 or more reveals the deception.

If the character beats all other participants, she wins the pot.

Sleight of Hand

Roll (Dex + Trickery): A roll against Difficulty 1 lets a character palm a coin-sized, unattended object. Minor feats of sleight of hand, such as making a coin disappear, also have a Difficulty of 1 unless an observer is concentrating on noticing what the character is doing.

When a character performs this Skill under close observation, the character's Skill roll is opposed by the observer's Listen/Spot roll. The observer's roll doesn't prevent the character from performing the action, just from doing it unnoticed.

When a character tries to take something from another person, the character's opponent makes a Listen/Spot roll to detect the attempt. To obtain the object, the character must get a result of 3 or higher, regardless of the opponent's roll result. The opponent detects the attempt if his roll result beats the character's roll result, whether the character takes the object or not.

A character can use sleight of hand to conceal a small weapon or object on his body.

A second sleight of hand attempt against the same target, or when being watched by the same observer, has a Difficulty 1 higher than the first roll if the first roll failed or if the attempt was noticed.

Leadership

Leadership is the ability to direct groups of people for a common cause. You can learn this Skill during military exercises, elections and sales drives in a high-pressure office environment. It's a "soft" Skill, but it's highly sought after by people from all walks of life. They're willing to pay for team building exercises, spin doctors and managerial gurus to give them the gift.

Basic Leadership

Roll (Cha + Leadership): Roll when you want to help a group of people (at least two) cooperate on an activity. They use your ideas and draw inspiration from you to better complete the task. You must lead a minimum of two people.

The number of people involved modifies the leader's dice pool:

Number of People (approx.)*	Dice Modifier
Less than 5	+2
5-10	+1
10-20	0
20-50	–1
50-100	–2
100-250	–3
250-500	–4
500-1000	–5

*Thresholds are at the GM's discretion. Within 10% of the threshold, the Difficulty could be the next modifier up or down.

Successes become bonus dice the leader can add to followers' dice pools when they're used in the service of the activity. Adding these dice uses them up. If the leader is present, she decides when to use them by giving instructions on the spot. If not, followers decide when to apply them. These bonus dice can apply to rolls to attack and defend in combat, provided that at least two followers are cooperating during the fight.

The leader needs communications tools to direct large numbers or people spread around a large area. If she doesn't have the proper tools, double all dice pool penalties for the Leadership roll. In some cases, effective leadership might just be impossible without specific technologies.

Multiple leaders can contribute Skill checks (and bonus dice) to a single task. There can be no more than one effective leader for every five people, and with this proportion, leaders operate at a –1 penalty to dice pools due to top-heavy management (or "too many cooks"). At one leader in 10, there's no such additional penalty. It is possible to stack Leadership results on Leadership rolls at a dice pool penalty of –2 for the first leader and an additional –2 for every other leader.

Listen/Spot

Master burglars, security guards and hunters all learn to hone the dominant human senses. Some people are born with an extreme natural talent for detecting sound and subtle sights; others have to develop it on the fly to avoid police, track their prey or watch for intruders.

Listening

Roll (Sense + Listen/Spot): Make a Listen/Spot roll against a Difficulty that reflects how quiet the noise is that a character might hear or against an opposed Move Silently roll.

The GM may call for a Listen/Spot roll by any character in a position to hear something. A character can also make a Listen roll voluntarily if she wants to try to hear something in the character's vicinity.

The GM may make the Listen/Spot roll in secret so that the character doesn't know whether not hearing anything means that nothing is there or that the character failed the roll.

A successful Listen/Spot roll when there isn't anything to hear results in the character hearing nothing.

Difficulty	Sound
–3	Gunfire
–1	A melee battle
0	People talking
	An encumbered person in walking at a slow pace, trying not to make noise
1	An unenecumbered person walking at a slow pace, trying not to make any noise
2	A tiger stalking prey [1]
4	A bird flying through the air
+1	Through a door
+2	Through a solid wall

1 This is actually an opposed roll; the Difficulty given is a typical Stealth roll (or equivalent result) for such a creature.

Condition	*Roll Penalty*
Per 3 feet of distance	–1
Listener distracted	–1

Spotting

Roll (Sense + Listen/Spot): The Listen/Spot Skill is also used to visually notice items that aren't immediately obvious and people who are attempting to hide. The GM may call for a Spot roll by a character who is in a position to notice something. A character can also make a Spot roll voluntarily if she wants to try to notice something in his vicinity.

The GM may make the Listen/Spot roll in secret so that the character doesn't know whether not noticing anything means that nothing is there or that the character failed the roll.

A successful Listen/Spot roll when there isn't anything to notice results in the character noticing nothing.

Spot is often used to notice a person or creature hiding from view. In such cases, the character's Spot roll is opposed by the Stealth roll of the character trying not to be seen. Spot is also used to detect someone in disguise (see the Disguise Skill), or to notice a concealed weapon on another person.

A character's visual Listen/Spot roll is modified by a –1 penalty for every 3 feet of distance between the character and the character or object she is trying to discern. The roll carries a further –1 penalty if the character is in the midst of activity.

Unarmed Combat

Roll (Dex + Unarmed Combat): Pugilism, wrestling, biting, brawling and fancy kicks are all unarmed combat moves, supporting a Skill devoted to hurting or restraining another person without a weapon. See **Violence, Danger and Madness** for details.

Formal Skills

Formal Skills normally require training by others; it's nearly impossible to reach high levels of ability (three ranks or higher) without learning under an instructor, as the best methods for these Skills are systematized instead of intuitive. Characters with no ranks in formal Skills can attempt them at a –1 penalty to their roll. Furthermore, untrained characters must always have the proper equipment on hand to attempt any formal Skill or the roll automatically fails.

Craft

This Skill encompasses several categories, each of them treated as a separate Skill: Craft (chemical), Craft (electronic), Craft (mechanical), Craft (pharmaceutical), Craft (structural), Craft (visual arts), and Craft (writing).

Craft rolls generally use Int or Wis + Craft.

Craft Skills are specifically focused on creating objects. To use a Craft Skill effectively, a character must have a kit or some other set of basic tools. The purchase Difficulty of this equipment varies according to the particular Craft Skill.

To use Craft, first decide what the character is trying to make and consult the category descriptions below.

Craft (chemical)

Roll (Int + Craft): This Skill allows a character to mix chemicals to create acids, bases, explosives, and poisonous substances.

Acids and Bases: Acids are corrosives substances. Bases neutralize acids but do not deal damage. A base of a certain type counteracts an acid of the same type or a less potent type.

	Craft Difficulty		
Type of Acid	**Acid**	**Base**	**Tim**
Mild (2 pts. Health damage/turn)	2	1	1 min.
Potent (3 pts. Health damage/turn)	3	2	5 min.
Concentrated (4 pts. Health damage/turn)	4	3	1 hr.

Explosives: Building an explosive from scratch is dangerous. If the Craft (chemical) roll fails, the raw materials are wasted. If the roll fails by 2 or more, the explosive compound detonates as it is being made, dealing half of its intended damage to the builder and anyone else in the burst radius.

If the roll succeeds, the final product is a solid material, about the size of a brick. An explosive compound does not include a fuse or detonator. Connecting a fuse or detonator requires a Profession (demolitions) roll.

Type of Scratch-Built Explosive	Craft Diff.	Dex + Dodge Difficulty	Time
Improvised (2 dice Health/5 feet)	1	1	1 turn
Simple (4 dice Health/10 feet)	2	1	1 min.
Moderate (8 dice Health/15 feet)	3	2	1 hr.
Complex (12 dice Health/20 feet)	4	3	3 hr.
Powerful (16 dice Health/25 feet)	5	4	12 hr.
Devastating (24 dice Health/30 feet)	6	5	24 hr.

Poisonous Substances: Solid poisons are usually ingested. Liquid poisons are most effective when injected directly into the bloodstream. Gaseous poisons must be inhaled to be effective. The table below summarizes the characteristics of various poisons.

Roll Difficulty: The Difficulty of the Constitution roll to negate the effects of the poison.

Initial Damage: The damage dice a character takes immediately upon failing his roll.

Secondary Damage: The damage dice a character takes after 1 minute of exposure to the poison if the character fails a second roll.

Craft Difficulty: The Difficulty of the Craft roll to create a quantity of the poison.

If the Craft roll succeeds, the final product is a synthesized solid or liquid poison stored in a bottle (containing 4 doses) or a gas stored in a pressurized cylinder.

When released, the gas is sufficient to fill a 1-foot-radius area and takes 1 turn to fill the area.

Poison	Type	Control Diff.	Initial Dmg.	Secondary Dmg.	Time	Craft Diff.
Arsenic	Ingest	1	2 Stun	2 Health	4 hours	1
Atropine	Injury	1	2 Stun	1 Health	1 hour	1
Belladonna (plant)	Injury	2	3 Stun	6 Stun	n/a	n/a
Chloroform	Inhale	2	KO 1d10/2 hours	—	4 hours	2
Curare (plant)	Injury	2	3 Stun	3 Stun	n/a	n/a
Cyanide	Injury	2	3 Health	3 Health	2 hours	2
Knockout gas	Inhale	2	1 Stun	KO'd 1d10/2 hours	8 hours	3
Mustard gas	Inhale	2	1 Health	3 Health	8 hours	2
Puffer poison (fish)	Injury	1	2 Stun	Paralysis 2d10 minutes	n/a	n/a
Tear gas	Inhale	1	Nausea 1d10 turns	—	4 hours	3
VX nerve gas	Inhale	3	2 Health	5 Health	48 hours	5

Craft (electronic)

Roll (Int + Craft): This Skill allows a character to build electronic equipment from scratch, such as audio and video equipment, timers and listening devices, or radios and communication devices.

When building an electronic device from scratch, the character describes the kind of device she wants to construct; then the Gamemaster decides whether the device is simple, moderate, complex, or advanced compared to current technology.

Type of Scratch-Built Electronics (Examples)	Craft Difficulty	Tim
Simple (timer or detonator)	2	1 hr.
Complex (cell phone)	3	24 hr.
Advanced (computer)	4	60 hr.

Craft (Forgery)

Roll (Int + Craft): Forgery requires materials appropriate to the document being forged, and some time. To forge a document the character needs to have seen a similar document before. The complexity of the document, the character's degree of familiarity with it, and whether the character needs to reproduce the signature or handwriting of a specific individual, provide modifiers to the Trickery roll, as shown below.

Factor	Roll Modifier	Tim
Document Type		
Moderate (letterhead, business form)	–1	3 min.
Complex (stock certificate, driver's license)	–2	1 hr.
Difficult (passport)	–3	4 hr.
Extreme (military/law enforcement ID)	–4	24 hr.

Familiarity	
Unfamiliar (seen once for less than a minute)	–1
Fairly familiar (seen for several minutes)	+0
Quite familiar (on hand, or studied at leisure)	+1
Forger has produced other documents of same type	+1
Document includes specific signature	–1

Some documents require security or authorization codes, whether authentic ones or additional forgeries. The GM makes the character's roll secretly so the character is not sure how good his forgery is.

The Skill is also used to detect someone else's forgery. The result of the original Trickery roll that created the document is opposed by a Trickery roll by the person who examines the document to roll its authenticity. If the examiner's roll result is equal to or higher than the original Craft roll, the document is determined to be fraudulent. The examiner gains bonuses or penalties on his roll as given in the table below.

Condition	Examiner's Roll Modifier
Type of document unknown to examiner	–4
Type of document somewhat known to examiner	–2
Type of document well known to examiner	+0
Document is put through additional tests [1]	+4
Examiner only casually reviews the document [1]	–2

[1] Cumulative with any of the first three conditions on the table. Apply this modifier along with one of the other three whenever appropriate.

A document that contradicts procedure, orders, or previous knowledge, or one that requires the examiner to relinquish a possession or a piece of information, can increase the examiner's suspicion (and thus create favorable circumstances for the examiner's opposed Craft roll).

Craft (mechanical)

Roll (Int + Craft): This Skill allows a character to build mechanical devices from scratch, including engines and engine parts, weapons, armor, and other gadgets. When building a mechanical device from scratch, the character describes the kind of device she wants to construct; then the GM decides if the device is simple, moderate, complex, or advanced compared to current technology.

Type of Scratch-Built Mechanical Device (Examples)	Craft Difficulty	Tim
Simple (tripwire trap)	2	1 hr
Moderate (engine component, light armor)	3	12 hr.
Complex (automobile engine, 9mm autoloader handgun)	4	24 hr.
Advanced (jet engine)	5	60 hr.

Craft (pharmaceutical)

Roll (Int + Craft): This Skill allows a character to compound medicinal drugs to aid in recovery from treatable illnesses. A medicinal drug gives a +2 bonus on Constitution rolls made to resist the effects of a disease.

The Craft (pharmaceutical) roll is based on the severity of the disease to be countered as measured by the Difficulty of the Constitution roll needed to resist it.

Disease Fortitude Save Difficulty	Craft Difficulty	Time
2	1	1 hr.
3	2	3 hr.
4	3	6 hr.

5	4	12 hr.

Craft (structural)

Roll (Wis + Craft): This Skill allows a character to build wooden, concrete, or metal structures from scratch, including bookcases, desks, walls, houses, and so forth, and includes such handyman Skills as plumbing, house painting, drywall, laying cement, and building cabinets.

Type of Scratch-Built Structure (Examples)	Craft Difficulty	Time
Simple (bookcase, false wall)	2	12 hr.
Moderate (catapult, shed, house deck)	3	24 hr.
Complex (bunker, domed ceiling)	4	60 hr.
Advanced (house)	5	600 hr.

Craft (visual art)

Roll (Wis + Craft): This Skill allows a character to create paintings or drawings, take photographs, use a video camera, or in some other way create a work of visual art.

When attempting to create a work of visual art, the character simply makes a Craft (visual art) roll, the result of which determines the quality of the work.

Skill Roll Result	Effort Achieved
1	Untalented amateur
2	Talented amateur
3	Professional
4	Expert
5	Master

Creating a work of visual art requires at least a full turn, but usually takes an hour, a day, or more, depending on the scope of the project.

Craft (writing)

Roll (Int + Craft): This Skill allows a character to create short stories, novels, scripts and screenplays, newspaper articles and columns, and similar works of writing.

When creating a work of writing, the player simply makes a Craft (writing) roll, the result of which determines the quality of the work.

Skill Roll Result	Effort Achieved
1	Untalented amateur
2	Talented amateur
3	Professional
4	Expert
5	Master

Creating a work of writing requires at least 1 hour, but usually takes a day, a week, or more, depending on the scope of the project.

Concentration

Concentration is learned through meditation or by performing exacting tasks where the slightest flaw spells disaster. Characters who discipline themselves this way find it easy to filter out unwanted distractions when necessary.

Roll (Wis + Concentration): A character exercises Concentration whenever she may potentially be distracted. Distractions include wound penalties and other adverse modifiers. Make Concentration rolls to nullify these penalties in the character's very next action. Each success removes a –1 die penalty. You may use Concentration to remove penalties that accrue due to pain and distractions (wound, light, sound, jostling, emotional turmoil) but not penalties that impose strictly pragmatic limitations, such as blindness, deafness or poor tools for the job.

Drive

All characters from a modern Western background can drive a car with an automatic transmission (even if it's not safe or legal for them to do so). The Drive Skill covers standard transmissions, unusual road vehicles (such as trucks) and most importantly, the ability to drive *well*, accounting for emergencies and, in some cases, stunts.

Roll (Wis or Dex + Drive): Routine tasks, such as ordinary driving, don't require a Skill roll. Make a roll only when some unusual circumstance exists (such as inclement weather or an icy surface), or when the character is driving during a dramatic situation (the character is being chased or attacked, for example, or is trying to reach a destination in a limited amount of time). When driving, the character can attempt simple maneuvers or stunts.

Firearms

Roll (Dex or Sen + Firearms): Characters with this Skill know how to aim, load and care for all common firearms, ranging from pistols to assault weapons. This Skill also covers aiming a crossbow (though caring for it is a Craft Skill). See **Violence, Danger and Madness** for details.

Melee Weapons

Roll (Dex + Melee Weapons): This is the Skill of using knives, sword, clubs, errant wine bottles and other hand weapons. See **Violence, Danger and Madness** for details.

Perform

This Skill encompasses several categories, each of them treated as a separate Skill. These categories are identified and defined below.

Roll (Varies; see below): The character is accomplished in some type of artistic expression and knows how to put on a performance. The character can impress audiences with his talent and Skill. The quality of the character's performance depends on his roll result.

The eight Perform categories, and the qualities each one encompasses, are as follows.

Act (Cha + Perform): The character is a gifted actor, capable of performing drama, comedy, or action-oriented roles with some level of Skill.

Dance (Dex + Perform): The character is a gifted dancer, capable of performing rhythmic and patterned bodily movements to music.

Keyboards (Sen + Perform): The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing keyboard musical instruments, such as piano, organ, and synthesizer.

Percussion Instruments (Dex + Perform): The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing percussion musical instruments, such as drums, cymbals, triangle, xylophone, and tambourine.

Sing (Cha + Perform): The character is a musician gifted with a talent for producing musical tones with your voice.

Stand-Up (Wis + Perform): The character is a gifted comedian, capable of performing a stand-up routine before an audience.

Stringed Instruments (Sen + Perform): The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing stringed musical instruments, such as banjo, guitar, harp, lute, sitar, and violin.

Wind Instruments (Sen + Perform): The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing wind musical instruments, such as flute, bugle, trumpet, tuba, bagpipes, and trombone.

Res	Performance
1	Amateur performance. Audience may appreciate your performance, but isn't impressed.
2	Routine performance. Audience enjoys your performance, but it isn't exceptional.
3	Great performance. Audience highly impressed.
4	Memorable performance. Audience enthusiastic.
5	Masterful performance. Audience awed.

Search

Search is used to scour objects and people for hidden features, details or compartments. Bouncers often have a basic understanding of the skill; police, prison workers and customs agents are particularly adept at finding contraband, secret rooms and other hidden things.

Roll (Senses + Search): The character generally must be within 1 feet of the object or surface to be examined. A character can examine up to a 5-foot-by-5-foot area or a volume of goods 5 feet on a side with a single roll.

A Search roll can turn up individual footprints, but does not allow a character to follow tracks or tell the character which direction the creature or creatures went or came from.

Difficulty	Task
1	Ransack an area to find a certain object.
3	Notice a typical secret compartment, a simple trap, or an obscure clue.
4+	Find a complex or well-hidden secret compartment or trap; notice an extremely obscure clue.

Sense Motive

Most people are easily taken in by a lie, but characters with Sense Motive – detectives, lawyers, crooks and spies, to be sure – turn a practiced, cynical eye toward any statement that isn't self-evident. They look for physical "tells," excessively elaborate excuses and facts that don't add up.

Roll (Wis + Sense Motive): A successful roll allows the character to avoid being bluffed (see the Bluff Skill). Sense Motive does not, however, allow a character to determine whether a given statement is a lie. The character can also use the Skill to tell when someone is behaving oddly or to assess someone's trustworthiness. In addition, a character can use this Skill to make an assessment of a social situation. With a successful roll (Difficulty 3), the character can get the feeling from another's behavior that something is wrong. Also, the character can get the feeling that someone is trustworthy and honorable.

Stealth

Most characters can pick up one or two ranks of Stealth by sneaking out of their parents' house and dodging security guards. After that, thieves, undercover cops and Special Forces operatives are among those who can really master the Skill of hiding and sneaking.

Hiding and Sneaking

Roll (Dex + Stealth): A character's Stealth roll is opposed by the Listen/Spot roll of anyone who might see the character. The character can move up to half his normal speed and hide at no penalty. It's practically impossible (–3 penalty) to hide while attacking or running.

If people are observing the character, even casually, she can't hide. The character can run around a corner so that she is out of sight and then hide, but the others then know at least where the character went.

Cover and concealment grant circumstance bonuses to Stealth rolls, as shown below. Note that a character can't hide if she has less than one-half cover or concealment.

Cover or Concealment	Circumstance Bonus
Three-quarters	+1
Nine-tenths	+2

Tailing

Roll (Gra + Stealth): A character can use Stealth to tail a person in public. Using the Skill in this manner assumes that there are other random people about, among whom the character can mingle to remain unnoticed. If the subject is worried about being followed, she can make a Spot roll (opposed

by the character's Stealth roll) every time she changes course (goes around a street corner, exits a building, and so on). If she is unsuspecting, she generally gets only a Listen/Spot roll after an hour of tailing.

Survival

Characters with the Survival Skill know how to find food, water and shelter in hostile environments. They also know how to navigate using a compass, the stars and landmarks. Traditional peoples, hunters, trappers and guides excel at these tasks.

Basic Survival

Roll (Wis + Survival): A character can keep himself and others safe and fed in the wild.

Difficulty	Task
1	Get along in the wild. The character can provide food and water for one other person for every success by which the character's roll result exceeds 1.
2	Construct a temporary (lasts one day) shelter. The character can provide shelter for one other person for every success by which the character's roll result exceeds 1.
3	Avoid natural hazards (quicksand, poisonous plants and animals) and survive extreme environments desert heat and arctic cold.
4	Find medicinal plants; construct tools and weapons from available materials.
5	Take shelter against hurricanes, tornados and other natural disasters.

Navigating and Orienteering

Roll (Wis + Survival): Make a Survival roll when a character is trying to find his way to a distant location without directions or other specific guidance. Generally, a character does not need to make a roll to find a local street or other common urban site, or to follow an accurate map. However, the character might make a roll to wend his way through a dense forest or a labyrinth of underground storm drains.

For movement over a great distance, make a Survival roll. The Difficulty depends on the length of the trip. If the character succeeds, she moves via the best reasonable course toward his goal. If the character fails, she still reaches the goal, but it takes the character twice as long (the character loses time backtracking and correcting his path). If the character fails by more than 5, she travels the expected time, but only gets halfway to his destination, at which point the character becomes lost.

A character may make a second Survival roll (Difficulty 3) to regain his path. If the character succeeds, she continues on to his destination; the total time for the trip is twice the normal time. If the character fails, she loses half a day before the character can try again. The character keeps trying until she succeeds, losing half a day for each failure.

Length of Trip	Difficulty
Short (a few hours)	2
Moderate (a day or two)	3
Long (up to a week)	4
Extreme (more than a week)	5

When faced with multiple choices, such as at a branch in a tunnel, a character can make a Survival roll (Difficulty 3) to intuit the choice that takes the character toward a known destination. If unsuccessful, the character chooses the wrong path, but at the next juncture, with a successful roll, the character realizes his mistake.

A character cannot use this function of Survival to find a path to a site if the character has no idea where the site is located. The GM may choose to make the Survival roll for the character in secret, so she doesn't know from the result whether the character is following the right or wrong path.

A character can use Survival to determine his position on earth without the use of any high-tech equipment by checking the constellations or other natural landmarks. The character must have a clear view of the night sky to make this roll. The Difficulty is 2.

Tracking

Roll (Sen + Survival): To find tracks or follow them for one mile requires a Survival roll. The character must make another Survival roll every time the tracks become difficult to follow.
The character moves at half his or her normal speed (or at the character's normal speed with a –1 penalty on the check, or at up to twice the character's speed with a –2 penalty on the check). The Difficulty depends on the surface and the prevailing conditions.

Surface	Track Difficulty
Very soft	1
Soft	2
Firm	3
Hard	4

Very Soft: Any surface (fresh snow, thick dust, wet mud) that holds deep, clear impressions of footprints.

Soft: Any surface soft enough to yield to pressure, but firmer than wet mud or fresh snow, in which the quarry leaves frequent but shallow footprints.
Firm: Most normal outdoor or exceptionally soft or dirty indoor surfaces. The quarry might leave some traces of its passage, but only occasional or partial footprints can be found.
Hard: Any surface that doesn't hold footprints at all, such as bare rock, concrete, metal decks or indoor floors. The quarry leaves only traces, such as scuff marks.
If the character fails a Survival check, he or she can retry after 1 hour (outdoors) or 10 minutes (indoors) of searching.

Condition	Dice Pool Modifier
Every three targets in the group being tracked	+1
Every 24 hours since the trail was made	–1
Rain since the trail was made	–1
Fresh snow cover since the trail was made	–2
Overcast or moonless night	–2
Moonlight	–1
Fog or precipitation during tracking	–2
Tracked target hides trail (and moves at half speed)	–5

Specialized Skills

Specialized Skills always require dedicated training. In many cases, unskilled characters cannot attempt any task that would require a Specialized Skill roll. For example, a character without the Computer Use Skill can still surf the Internet and play games, but can't perform any task that would require a roll, such as programming or searching for files on an unfamiliar computer. The GM may make occasional exceptions to this rule. These exceptions still impose a –2 penalty on dice rolls.

Computer Use

Computer Use represents the skills of a hacker, sysop or software technician. In the modern world, many people learn this Skill even if their primary job involves a completely different set of abilities.

General Computer Use

Roll (Int + Computer Use): Most normal computer operations don't require a Computer Use roll (though a character might have to make a Research roll; see the Research Skill description). However, searching an unfamiliar network for a particular file, writing computer programs, altering existing programs to perform differently (better or worse), and breaking through computer security are all relatively difficult and require Skill rolls.

Find File: The Skill can be used for finding files or data on an unfamiliar system. The Difficulty for the roll and the time required are determined by the size of the site on which the character is searching.

Finding public information on the Internet does not fall under this category; usually, such a task requires a Research roll. This application of the Computer Use Skill only pertains to finding files on private systems with which the character is not familiar.

Size of Site	Difficulty	Time
Personal computer	1	1 turn
Small office network	2	2 turns
Large office network	3	1 minute
Massive corporate network	4	10 minutes

Defeat Computer Security: This application of Computer Use can't be used untrained. The Difficulty is determined by the quality of the security program installed to defend the system. If the roll is failed by 2 or more, the security system immediately alerts its administrator that there has been an unauthorized entry. An alerted administrator may attempt to identify the character or cut off the character's access to the system.

Sometimes, when accessing a difficult site, the character has to defeat security at more than one stage of the operation. If the character beats the Difficulty by 2 or more when attempting to defeat computer security, the character automatically succeeds at all subsequent security rolls at that site until the end of the character's session (see Computer Hacking below).

Write Program: A character can create a program to help with a specific task. Doing so grants the character a +1 bonus to the task.

A specific task, in this case, is one type of operation with one target.

The Difficulty to write a program is 3; the time required is 1 hour.

Level of Security	Difficulty
Minimum	3
Average	4
Exceptional	5

Maximum	6

Computer Hacking

Roll (Int + Computer Use): Breaking into a secure computer or network is often called hacking.

When a character hacks, she attempts to invade a site. A site is a virtual location containing files, data, or applications. A site can be as small as a single computer, or as large as a corporate network connecting computers and data archives all over the world—the important thing is that access to the site connects the user to everything within it. Some sites can be accessed via the Internet; others are not connected to any outside network and can only be tapped into by a user who physically accesses a computer connected to the site.

Every site is overseen by a system administrator—the person in charge of the site, and who maintains its security. Often, the system administrator is the only person with access to all of a site's functions and data. A site can have more than one system administrator; large sites have a system administrator on duty at all times. A character is the system administrator of his personal computer.

When a character hacks into a site, the visit is called a session. Once a character stops accessing the site, the session is over. The character can go back to the site in the future; when she does, it's a new session.

Several steps are required to hack into a site:

Covering Tracks: By making a Computer Use roll (Difficulty 3), a character can alter his identifying information. This imposes a –1 penalty on any attempt made to identify the character if his activity is detected. This step is optional.

Access the Site: There are two ways to do this: physically or over the Internet.

Physical Access: A character gains physical access to the computer, or a computer connected to the site. If the site being hacked is not connected to the Internet, this is probably the only way a character can access it. A variety of Skill rolls may be required, depending on the method used to gain access.

Internet Access: Reaching a site over the net requires two Computer Use rolls. The first roll (Difficulty 1) is needed to find the site on the net. The second is a roll to defeat computer security (see the Computer Use Skill description). Once a character has succeeded in both rolls, the character has accessed the site.

Locate What You're Looking For: To find the data (or application, or remote device) the character wants, make a Computer Use roll. See Find File under the Skill description.

Defeat File Security: Many networks have additional file security. If that's the case, the character needs to make another roll to defeat computer security.

Do Your Stuff: Finally, the character can actually do what she came to do. If the character just wants to look at records, no additional roll is needed. (A character can also download data, although that often takes several turns—or even several minutes, for especially large amounts of information—to complete.) Altering or deleting records sometimes requires yet another roll to defeat computer security. Other operations can be carried out according to the Computer Use Skill description.

Defend Security

Roll (Int + Computer Use): If the character is the system administrator for a site (which may be as simple as being the owner of a laptop), she can defend the site against intruders. If the site alerts the character to an intruder, the character can attempt to cut off the intruder's access (end the intruder's session), or even to identify the intruder.

To cut off access, make an opposed Computer Use roll against the intruder. If the character succeeds, the intruder's session is ended. The intruder might be able to defeat the character's security and access his site again, but the intruder will have to start the hacking process all over. Attempting to cut off access takes a full turn.

One surefire way to prevent further access is to simply shut the site down. With a single computer, that's often no big deal—but on a large site with many computers (or computers controlling functions that can't be interrupted), it may be time-consuming or even impossible.

To identify the intruder, make an opposed Computer Use roll against the intruder. If the character succeeds, the character learns the site from which the intruder is operating (if it's a single computer, the character learns the name of the computer's owner). Identifying the intruder requires 1 minute and is a separate roll from cutting off access. This roll can only be made if the intruder is accessing the character's site for the entire length of the roll—if the intruder's session ends before the character finishes the roll, the character automatically fails.

Degrade Programming

Roll (Int + Computer Use): A character can destroy or alter applications on a computer to make use of that computer harder or impossible. The Difficulty for the attempt depends on what the character tries to do. Crashing a computer simply shuts it down. Its user can restart it without making a Skill roll (however, restarting takes 1 minute). Destroying programming makes the computer unusable until the programming is repaired. Damaging programming imposes a –1 penalty on all Computer Use rolls made with the computer (sometimes this is preferable to destroying the programming,

since the user might not know that anything is wrong, and won't simply decide to use a different computer).

A character can degrade the programming of multiple computers at a single site; doing so adds +2 to the Difficulty for each additional computer.

Scope of Alteration	Difficulty	Time
Crash computer	1	1 minute
Destroy programming	2	1 minutes
Damage programming	3	1 minutes

Fixing the degraded programming requires 1 hour and a Computer Use roll against a Difficulty equal to the Difficulty for degrading it +1.

Operate Remote Device

Roll (Int + Computer Use): Many devices are computer-operated via remote links. If the character has access to the computer that controls such systems, the character can either shut them off or change their operating parameters. The Difficulty depends on the nature of the operation. If the character fails the roll by 2 or more, the system immediately alerts its administrator that there has been an unauthorized use of the equipment. An alerted administrator may attempt to identify the character or cut off his access to the system.

Type of Operation	Difficulty	Time
Shut down passive remote (including cameras and door locks)	3	1 turn per remote
Shut down active remote (including motion detectors and alarms)	4	1 turn per remote
Reset parameters	5	1 minute per remote
Change passcodes	4	1 minute

Hide evidence of alteration	+1	1 minute
Minimum security	–1	—
Exceptional security	+1	—
Maximum security	+2	—

Disable Device

Electronics technicians, locksmiths, private investigators and saboteurs all learn the Disable Device Skill, which includes mechanical and electronic security systems. The character also learns to work with related devices including (if necessary), exotic mechanical traps.

Possessing the proper tools gives a character the best chance of succeeding on a Disable Device roll. Opening a lock requires a lockpick set (for a mechanical lock) or an electrical tool kit (for an electronic lock). Opening a locked car calls for a car opening kit. Disabling a security device requires either a mechanical tool kit or an electronic toll kit, depending on the nature of the device. If the character does not have the appropriate tools, she takes a –1 penalty on your roll.

A lock release gun can open a mechanical lock of cheap or average quality without a Disable Device roll.

Open Lock

Roll (Int + Disable Device): The GM makes the Disable Device roll so that the character doesn’t necessarily know whether she has succeeded.

A character can pick conventional locks, finesse combination locks, and bypass electronic locks. The character must have a lockpick set (for a mechanical lock) or an electrical tool kit (for an electronic lock). The Difficulty depends on the quality of the lock.

Lock Type (Example)	Difficulty
Cheap (briefcase lock)	3
Average (home deadbolt)	4
High quality (business deadbolt)	5
High security (branch bank vault)	6
Ultra-high security (bank headquarters vault)	7

Disable a Security Device

Roll (Int + Disable Device): A character can disable a security device, such as an electric fence, motion sensor, or security camera. The character

must be able to reach the actual device. If the device is monitored, the fact that the character attempted to disable it will probably be noticed.

When disabling a monitored device, the character can prevent his tampering from being noticed. Doing so requires 1 minutes and an electrical tool kit, and increases the Difficulty of the roll by +1.

Device Type (Example)	Difficulty
Cheap (home door alarm)	3
Average (store security camera)	4
High quality (art museum motion detector)	5
High security (bank vault alarm)	6
Ultrahigh security (motion detector at Area 51)	7

Traps and Sabotage

Roll (Int + Disable Device): Disabling (or rigging or jamming) a simple mechanical device has a Difficulty of 1. More intricate and complex devices have higher Difficulties. The GM rolls the roll. If the roll succeeds, the character disables the device. If the roll fails by 4 or less, the character has failed but can try again. If the character fails by 2 or more, something goes wrong. If it’s a trap, the character springs it. If it’s some sort of sabotage, the character thinks the device is disabled, but it still works normally.

A character can rig simple devices to work normally for a while and then fail some time later (usually after 1d10 turns or minutes of use).

Disguise

Disguise is a highly specialized Skill. Actors might acquire a rank or two, but mastery is reserved for wardrobe and makeup artists, assassins and other undercover operatives. Characters learn to use body language along with makeup, clothing and prostheses.

Roll (Att + Disguise): A character’s Disguise roll result determines how good the disguise is. It is opposed by others’ Spot roll results. Make one Disguise roll even if several people make Listen/Spot rolls. The GM makes the character’s Disguise roll secretly so that the character is not sure how well his disguise holds up to scrutiny.

If the character doesn’t draw any attention to herself, however, others don’t get to make Spot rolls. If the character comes to the attention of people who are suspicious, the suspicious person gets to make a Listen/Spot roll.

The effectiveness of the character's disguise depends in part on how much the character is attempting to change his appearance.

Disguise	Modifier
Minor details only	+1
Appropriate uniform or costume	+2
Disguised as different sex	–2
Disguised as much different age	–2

If the character is impersonating a particular individual, those who know what that person looks like automatically get to make Spot rolls. Furthermore, they get a bonus on their Listen/Spot rolls.

Familiarity (choose closest)	Bonus
Recognizes on sight	+1
Friend or associate	+2
Intimate	+3

Usually, an individual makes a Listen/Spot roll to detect a disguise immediately upon meeting the character and each hour thereafter.

Investigate

Police officers, crime scene investigators and intelligence operatives learn this Skill. A character generally uses Search to discover clues and Investigate to analyze them. If the character has access to a crime lab, the character uses the Investigate Skill to collect and prepare samples for the lab. The result of the Investigate roll provides bonuses or penalties to the lab workers.

Analyzing Clues

Roll (Intelligence + Investigate): The character can make an Investigate roll to apply forensics knowledge to a clue. This function of the Investigate Skill does not give the character clues where none existed before. It simply allows the character to extract extra information from a clue she has found.

The base Difficulty to analyze a clue is 2. It is modified by the time that has elapsed since the clue was left, and whether or not the scene was disturbed.

Circumstances	*Difficulty Modifier*
Every day since event (max modifier +1)	+2
Scene is outdoors	+1
Scene slightly disturbed	+1
Scene moderately disturbed	+2
Scene extremely disturbed	+3

Collecting Evidence

The character can collect and prepare evidentiary material for a lab. This use of the Investigate Skill requires an evidence kit.

To collect a piece of evidence, make an Investigate roll (Difficulty 2). If the character succeeds, the evidence is usable by a crime lab. If the character fails, a crime lab analysis can be done, but the lab takes a –1 penalty on any necessary roll. If the character fails by 5 or more, the lab analysis simply cannot be done. On the other hand, if the character succeeds by 2 or more, the lab gains a +1 bonus on its rolls to analyze the material.

This function of the Investigate Skill does not provide the character with evidentiary items. It simply allows the character to collect items she has found in a manner that best aids in their analysis later, at a crime lab.

Knowledge

This Skill encompasses several categories, each of them treated as a separate Skill. These categories are identified and defined below.

Roll (Int + Knowledge): A character makes a Knowledge roll to see if the character knows something.

The Difficulty for answering a question within the character's field of study is 1 for easy questions, 2 for basic questions, and 3 to 5 for tough questions.

Appraising the value of an object is one sort of task that can be performed using Knowledge. The Difficulty depends on how common or obscure the object is.

The fourteen Knowledge categories, and the topics each one encompasses, are as follows.

Arcane Lore: The occult, magic and the supernatural, astrology, numerology, and similar topics.

Art: Fine arts and graphic arts, including art history and artistic techniques. Antiques, modern art, photography, and performance art forms such as music and dance, among others.

Behavioral Sciences: Psychology, sociology, and criminology.

Business: Business procedures, investment strategies, and corporate structures. Bureaucratic procedures and how to navigate them.

Civics: Law, legislation, litigation, and legal rights and obligations. Political and governmental institutions and processes.

Current Events: Recent happenings in the news, sports, politics, entertainment, and foreign affairs.

Earth and Life Sciences: Biology, botany, genetics, geology, and paleontology. Medicine and forensics.

History: Events, personalities, and cultures of the past. Archaeology and antiquities.

Physical Sciences: Astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, physics, and engineering.

Popular Culture: Popular music and personalities, genre films and books, urban legends, comics, science fiction, and gaming, among others.

Tactics: Techniques and strategies for disposing and maneuvering forces in combat.

Technology: Current developments in cutting-edge devices, as well as the background necessary to identify various technological devices.

Theology and Philosophy: Liberal arts, ethics, philosophical concepts, and the study of religious faith, practice, and experience.

Urban: Street and urban culture, local underworld personalities and events.

Pilot

This Skill encompasses several categories, each of them treated as a separate Skill. Each Skill covers one of the following vehicle types: Small Motorboat, Large Motorboat, Sailboat, Small Ship, Large Ship, Prop Engine, Commercial Jet, Military Jet, Helicopter.

Roll (Typically Dex or Wis + Pilot): Typical piloting tasks don’t require rolls. Rolls are required during combat, for special maneuvers, or in other extreme circumstances, or when the pilot wants to attempt something outside the normal parameters of the vehicle. When flying, the character can attempt simple maneuvers and stunts (actions in which the pilot attempts to do something complex very quickly or in a limited space).

Each vehicle’s description includes a maneuver modifier that applies to Pilot rolls made by the operator of the vehicle.

Profession

This Skill encompasses several categories, each of them treated as a separate Skill. There are many different kinds of Professions. Here are two with distinctive benefits to offer.

Profession (demolitions)

Roll (Int + Profession): Setting a simple explosive to blow up at a certain spot doesn't require a roll, but connecting and setting a detonator does. Also, placing an explosive for maximum effect against a structure calls for a roll, as does disarming an explosive device.

Set Detonator: Most explosives require a detonator to go off. Connecting a detonator to an explosive requires a Profession roll (Difficulty 1). Failure means that the explosive fails to go off as planned. Failure by 1 or more means the explosive goes off as the detonator is being installed.

A character can make an explosive difficult to disarm. To do so, the character chooses the disarm Difficulty before making his roll to set the detonator (it must be higher than 1). The character's Difficulty to set the detonator is equal to the disarm Difficulty.

Place Explosive Device: Carefully placing an explosive against a fixed structure (a stationary, unattended inanimate object) can maximize the damage dealt by exploiting vulnerabilities in the structure's construction.

The GM makes the roll (so that the character doesn't know exactly how well she has done). On a result of 2 or higher, the explosive deals double damage to the structure against which it is placed. On a result of 4 or higher, it deals triple damage to the structure. In all cases, it deals normal damage to all other targets within its burst radius.

Disarm Explosive Device: Disarming an explosive that has been set to go off requires a Profession roll. The Difficulty is usually 1, unless the person who set the detonator chose a higher disarm Difficulty. If the character fails the roll, she does not disarm the explosive. If the character fails by more than 2, the explosive goes off.

Profession (animal handler)

Roll (Cha + Profession): The time required to get an effect and the Difficulty depend on what the character is trying to do.

Task	*Time*	*Difficulty*
Handle an animal	Turn	1

“Push” an animal	Turn	4
Teach an animal a trick	1 week	See text
Train an animal for a purpose	See text	See text

Handle an Animal: This means to command an animal to perform a task or trick that it knows. If the animal is wounded or has taken any ability score damage, the Difficulty increases by +1. If the roll is successful, the animal performs the task or trick on its next action.

“Push” an Animal: To push an animal means to get it to perform a task or trick that it doesn’t know, but is physically capable of performing. If the roll is successful, the animal performs the task or trick on its next action.

Teach an Animal a Trick: The character can teach an animal a specific trick, such as “attack” or “stay,” with one week of work and a successful Handle Animal roll. A wild animal can learn a maximum of three tricks, while a member of a domesticated species can learn a maximum of six tricks.

The character can teach an animal to obey only that character. Any other person attempting to make the animal perform a trick takes a –1 penalty on his Handle Animal roll. Teaching an animal to obey only the character counts as a trick (in terms of how many tricks the animal can learn). It does not require a roll; however, it increases the Difficulty of all tricks the character teaches the animal by +1. If the animal already knows any tricks, the character cannot teach it to obey only that character.

Possible tricks include, but are not limited to, the following.

Attack (Difficulty 3): The animal attacks apparent enemies. The character may point to a particular enemy to direct the animal to attack that enemy. Normally, an animal only attacks humans and other animals. Teaching an animal to attack all creatures (including unnatural creatures such as undead and aberrations if they exist in your campaign) counts as two tricks.

Come (Difficulty 2): The animal comes to the character, even if the animal normally would not do so (such as following the character onto a boat).

Defend (Difficulty 3): The animal defends the character (or is ready to defend the character if no threat is present). Alternatively, the character can command the animal to defend a specific other character.

Down (Difficulty 2): The animal breaks off from combat or otherwise backs down.

Fetch (Difficulty 2): The animal goes and gets something. The character must point out a specific object, or else the animal fetches some random object.

Guard (Difficulty 3): The animal stays in place and prevents others from approaching.

Heel (Difficulty 2): The animal follows the character closely, even to places where it normally wouldn't go.

Perform (Difficulty 2): The animal does a variety of simple tricks such as sitting up, rolling over, and so on.

Seek (Difficulty 2): The animal moves into an area and searches for something of interest. It stops and indicates the first thing of interest it finds. What constitutes an item of interest to an animal can vary. Animals almost always find other creatures or characters of interest. To understand that it's looking for a specific object, the animal must make an Intelligence roll (Difficulty 1).

Stay (Difficulty 2): The animal stays in place waiting for the character to return. It does not challenge other creatures that come by, though it still defends itself if it needs to.

Track (Difficulty 3): The animal tracks the scent presented to it.

Work (Difficulty 2): The animal pulls or pushes a medium or heavy load.

Train an Animal: Rather than teaching an animal individual tricks, the character can train an animal for a general purpose. Essentially, an animal's purpose represents a preselected set of known tricks that fit into a common scheme. An animal can be trained for one general purpose only, though if the animal is capable of learning additional tricks (above and beyond those included in its general purpose) it may do so. Training an animal for a purpose requires fewer rolls than teaching individual tricks.

Combat Riding (Difficulty 3, 6 weeks): An animal trained to bear a rider into combat knows Attack, Come, Defend, Down, Guard, and Heel. An animal trained in riding may be "upgraded" to an animal trained in combat riding by spending three weeks and making a Handle Animal roll (Difficulty 3). If the animal was trained in other tricks (in addition to those provided by training the animal for riding), those tricks are completely replaced by the combat riding tricks.

Fighting (Difficulty 3, 3 weeks): An animal trained for combat knows the following tricks: Attack, Down, and Stay.

Guarding (Difficulty 3, 4 weeks): An animal trained to guard knows the following tricks: Attack, Defend, Down, and Guard.

Laboring (Difficulty 2, 2 weeks): An animal trained for heavy labor knows Come and Work.

Hunting (Difficulty 3, 6 weeks): An animal trained for hunting knows Attack, Down, Fetch, Heel, Seek, and Track.

Performing (Difficulty 2, 4 weeks): An animal trained for performing knows Come, Fetch, Heel, Perform, and Stay.

Riding (Difficulty 2; 3 weeks): An animal trained to bear a rider knows Come, Heel, and Stay.

Repair

This Skill encompasses the ability to repair all kinds of mechanical, electrical and electronic devices.

Roll (Int + Repair): Most Repair rolls are made to fix complex electronic or mechanical devices. The Difficulty is set by the GM. In general, simple repairs have a Difficulty of 1 to 2 and require no more than a few minutes to accomplish. More complex repair work has a Difficulty of 3 or higher and can require an hour or more to complete. Making repairs also involves a monetary cost when spare parts or new components are needed, represented by a Wealth roll. If the GM decides this isn't necessary for the type of repair the character is attempting, then no Wealth roll is needed.

Repair Task (Example)	*Repair Difficulty*	*Time*
Simple (tool, simple weapon)	1	1 min.
Moderate (mechanical or electronic component)	2	1 min.
Complex (mechanical or electronic device)	3	1 hr.
Advanced (cutting-edge mechanical or electronic device)	4	1 hr.

Jury-Rig: A character can choose to attempt jury-rigged, or temporary, repairs. Doing this reduces the Repair roll Difficulty by 1 and allows the character to make the rolls in as little as a turn. However, a jury-rigged repair can only fix a single problem with a roll, and the temporary repair only lasts until the end of the current scene. The jury-rigged object must be fully repaired thereafter.

A character can also use jury-rig to hot-wire a car or jump-start an engine or electronic device. The Difficulty for this is at least 2, and it can be higher depending on the presence of security devices.

Research

Occultists, scientists and liberal arts scholars learn to find references quickly. The Research Skill provides the means to properly study occult sigils, mathematical formulae and obscure historical events. In some games, Research can spell the difference between victory and defeat in a struggle against dark forces. Demons are vulnerable to obscure liturgies and counterspells in coded, ancient languages. In others, it's possible to know too much; there are secrets that heal, and secrets that harm . . .

Basic Research

Roll (Int + Research): Researching a topic takes time, Skill, and some luck. The GM determines how obscure a particular topic is (the more obscure, the higher the Difficulty) and what kind of information might be available depending on where the character is conducting his research.

Information ranges from general to protected. Given enough time and a successful Skill roll, the character gets a general idea about a given topic. This assumes that

no obvious reasons exist why such information would be unavailable, and that the character has a way to acquire restricted or protected information.

The higher the roll result, the better and more complete the information. If the character wants to discover a specific fact, date, map, or similar bit of information, add +1 to +2 to the Difficulty.

Decipher Script

Roll (Int + Research): A character can decipher writing in an ancient language or in code, or interpret the meaning of an incomplete text. The base Difficulty is 3 for the simplest messages, 4 for standard codes, and 5 or higher for intricate or complex codes or exotic messages. Helpful texts or computer programs can provide a bonus (usually a +2 circumstance bonus) on the roll, provided they are applicable to the script in question.

If the roll succeeds, the character understands the general content of a piece of writing, reading about one page of text or its equivalent in 1 minute. If the roll fails, the GM makes a Wisdom roll (Difficulty 1) for the character to see if she avoids drawing a false conclusion about the text. (Success means that the character does not draw a false conclusion; failure means that the character does.)

The GM secretly makes both the Skill roll and the Wisdom roll so the character can't tell whether the conclusion drawn is accurate or not.

Treat Injury

Treat Injury begins with first aid, but as a practitioner increases in skill he can perform almost any medical task. Almost anyone can learn the first rank of the Skill by taking a short course; after that, practical experience or expensive schooling is required.

Medical Tasks

Roll (Int + Treat Injury): The Difficulty and effect depend on the task attempted.

Long-Term Care (Difficulty 2): With a medical kit, the successful application of this Skill allows a patient to recover Stun and Health Points at twice the resting rate.

A character can tend up to as many patients as she has ranks in the Skill. The patients need complete bed rest (doing nothing all day). The character needs to devote at least ½ hour of the day to each patient the character is caring for.

Restore Health/Stun Points (Difficulty 3): With a medical kit, if a character has lost Stun or Health Points, the character can restore some of them. A successful roll, as a turn, restores 1 Health or Stun point. The character may administer this treatment as many times per day as the recipient's Toughness score for each damage type. If the subject is dying (has suffered a 9th point of Health damage), this stabilizes her condition.

Surgery (Difficulty 4): With a surgery kit, a character can conduct field surgery. This application of the Treat Injury Skill carries a –1 penalty. Surgery requires 1d10/2 hours.

Surgery restores 1 Health Point for every Treat Injury rank of the healer with a successful Skill roll. Surgery can only be used successfully on a character once in a 24-hour period.

Treat Disease or Poison (Difficulty 2): A character can tend to a character infected with a treatable disease or toxin. Add extra successes as dice to the recipients' Constitution roll to resist the hazard.

Combat

Opening the Dark's combat system is designed to encourage detailed narration without mandating complex math. Here's the basic procedure:

Before Combat: Character actions determine the initial distance between combatants. Characters may ambush one another at this stage (usually with Dex + Stealth rolls opposed by potential victims' Sen + Listen/Spot rolls; if the victim can't sense the attacker, he can't defend).

Initiative: Roll 1d10 + Dex + Wis for each character (or side). Add the die roll to the combined scores; this is not a dice pool. Characters act in order from highest to lowest total Initiative. A character can delay action instead of acting on his Initiative. He can interrupt a slower character's action in this fashion.

Attack and Defend: Decide whether to perform one action (no penalty), multiple actions (–2 for the first action, additional –2 for each extra action) or a total defense (–1 for the first defense action and an additional –1 for each extra defense action, if defending *only*). Roll the following dice pools for most combat procedures:

- *Firearms Attack:* Dex + Firearms or Sen + Firearms
- *Melee Weapons Attack/Parry:* Dex + Melee Weapons
- *Thrown/Bow Attack:* Dex + Athletics
- *Unarmed Attack/Block:* Dex + Unarmed Combat
- *Dodge Attack:* Dex + Dodge

Damage: Add the damage rating for the weapon to the number of successes the met or exceeded the target's defense roll. Subtract this number from the target's Toughness + Armor. Roll the remainder (always at least 1 die) and apply successes as the appropriate type of damage (Stun or Health).

Additional Actions: Defend at any time, as many times as you like, until you have a base 0 dice after multiple action penalties. Other actions occur after all participants have acted once in Initiative order (or refused to act) doing something other than defending.

Time and Movement

Combat actions take place during single turn intervals. Remember that a turn only lasts a few seconds: enough for a flurry of blows or another kind of violent exchange.

Performing more than one combat action during a turn imposes a multiple action penalty. A typical combatant can also move up to 30 feet per turn. This is not a combat action and may be combined with attacking or evading attacks at no penalty. Characters can move an additional 30 feet (for a total of up to 60 feet) in a turn, but this *does* count as an action. If characters attack or perform other actions in the turn, they accrue multiple action dice penalties as if the extra movement was the first action.

Ambushes

Combatants might set up an ambush or other sneak attack.

Ambushes: The attacker's Dex + Stealth roll opposes the potential victim's Sense + Listen/Spot. If the attacker wins, the defender may not dodge or otherwise evade attack. The attacker goes first if no combat has been joined, but most roll Initiative for subsequent turns. An ambush that begins combat may not be part of a series of multiple actions.

Bluffing: See Chapter Two. Every two Bluff successes add a die to the character's attack, though the target can defend. The bluffing character automatically acts first if no combat was taking place, but must roll Initiative on subsequent turns. A bluffing attack that starts combat may not be part of a multiple action series.

If a bluff or ambush begins combat, victims do not respond to attacks except to defend, if permitted. After resolving these sneak attacks, move immediately into Initiative rolls to start standard combat.

Initiative

At the beginning of combat, roll Initiative to determine the order of actions. An Initiative roll is 1d10 + Dex + Wis. This isn't a dice pool, but a modifier to a single d10 roll.

You have several options as to how to handle Initiative:

Roll per Character: Roll Initiative for each character in combat.

Roll per Side: Roll 1d10 for each side in combat. Modify the roll with each side's Dex and Wis scores to determine individual Initiative ratings. This is useful if each combatant on a given side has the same scores, so you only have to determine one number for all of them.

Side + Major NPCs: If you have one important NPC that standard out from a group, you might roll his Initiative separately.

The Standard Rule: The default rule we recommend is to roll Initiative once for each PC and once for a group of NPCs with identical (or near-identical) game traits.

Order of Actions

A player (or the GM) declares a character's action in Initiative order, starting with the highest number and working down. There's no need to declare the action ahead of time. This is subject to the following complications:

Delay and Interrupt: If you want to see what another combatant is doing but he goes after you, you can delay acting and then interrupt the order with your action later on. You can react to another combatant this way, taking actions that force them to change what they're going to do. You may delay until everyone slower that your character has acted once. After that, you must either act or forfeit your action.

Multiple Actions: If you plan on using multiple actions you must declare this when you perform the first action in the series. Your first action occurs in standard Initiative order. Second actions occur only after every combatant has performed their first actions. Third actions only occur after everyone performing second actions has acted and so on. This does not apply to defense rolls, which can occur at any time.

Defending: You can always defend against attacks directed against you no matter when they occur, though you may be subject to multiple action penalties for defending more than once. If you did not declare a multiple action and have already acted once, you may not defend during that turn.

Furthermore, if you don't perform other actions you can declare a *total defense*. This lets you defend (and only defend) against multiple attacks for the entire turn at a –1 die penalty for the first defense roll, then a cumulative –1 penalty on top of that for each additional defense roll.

Attacking and Defending

Attack and defenses are resolved with opposed dice rolls. Ties go to the defender; if she meets or exceeds the attacker's successes the attack has no effect. If the attack succeeds, its damage dice pool is equal to the weapon's Damage rating plus a number of dice equal to the attacker's margin of success. Subtract this from the target's appropriate Toughness (always leaving at least 1 die) and roll what's left. Various maneuvers and conditions modify attack and defense dice pools.

Attacks

Characters employ the following maneuvers in combat:

Unarmed Striking

Unarmed Strike (Dex + Unarmed Combat): This is a typical punch, palm strike or quick elbow shot. A standard unarmed strike inflicts base Stun damage equal to the attacker's Strength score.

Vital Shot (Dex + Unarmed Combat): The character tries to gouge out the attacker's eyes, attack the larynx or other vital points. A vital shot inflicts 0 base damage; roll the margin of success as Health damage dice.

Kick/Strong Strike (Dex + Unarmed Combat): Resolve a typical kick (snap kick, football kick or push kick) just like a standard unarmed strike, but at a –2 dice pool

penalty to the attack. The attack inflicts an additional +2 dice of damage. Additionally, you may trade accuracy for damage with your unarmed attack to represent a more complex kick (spin kick, jump kick, etc.) or another attack that sacrifices speed and accuracy for power (such as a spinning backfist or haymaker). Each –1 dice pool penalty adds 1 damage die, with a maximum modifier equal to the character's Unarmed Combat rank.

Grappling

All grappling maneuvers are influenced by the opponent's size and weight, but these rules cover combat between combatants who are the size of adult humans. A bear-sized opponent gains +2 dice to grappling pools. A character the size of a typical 10-12 year old child subtracts 2 dice instead.

Clinch (Str + Unarmed Combat): This is the basic grappling attack. Success prevents the target from moving away from the attacker. It also allows the attacker and target to employ attacks that require a clinch. Clinches can also be used as a defense. A successful clinch adds bonus dice equal to the margin of success to some subsequent grappling attacks. This only applies to the next attack. You may add these bonus dice to subsequent clinches as well, progressively unbalancing the enemy before finishing him off.

The winner of a clinch can choose to take his opponent down to the ground, but he falls with his target.

Characters in a clinch can deliver unarmed attacks or use light weapons at no penalty, larger one-handed weapons at a –2 dice pool penalty and two handed weapons at a –4 dice pool penalty. The attacker effectively lets go of the clinch by making a subsequent attack, though he may reestablish it. Clinching with a weapon of object in one hand imposes a –2 dice pool penalty; clinching with objects in *both* hands is possible, but even more difficult, imposing a – 4 dice pool penalty.

Bite (Dex + Unarmed Combat): Clinch bonuses apply to bite attacks. Humans and many animals must clinch before biting. Creatures like dogs and similar predators do not need to clinch first, though they may clinch with their mouths before grinding in and actually inflicting damage. A human bite inflicts Stun damage, but other creatures might inflict Health wounds instead.

Choke/Lock (Str + Unarmed Combat): Clinch bonuses apply to choke and lock attacks. Your character must clinch before applying a lock. A lock inflicts base Stun damage equal to the attacker's Strength. Additionally, add the margin of success to the next, consecutive choke or lock attack. Additionally, the target must stay in contact with the attacker until he releases the lock or choke.

Take Object (Str + Unarmed Combat): Clinch bonuses apply to taking an object from a person. Your character must clinch before taking the object. You must score as many successes as the object holder's Strength. The opponent can choose to defend with a chinch instead, but loses the automatic protection of his Strength.

Throw Opponent (Dex + Unarmed Combat): Clinch bonuses apply to throws. Your character must clinch before throwing. She can throw the opponent a number of feet away equal to the roll's successes in any horizontal direction. She can throw the target a lesser distance if she desires. Throws inflict base Stun damage equal to the attacker's Strength. When rough terrain or great heights are involved, alter the damage accordingly.

Melee Weapons

Armed Strike (Dex + Melee Weapons): This is a standard swing, stab or other weapon blow. The weapon's base damage is the character's Strength + the weapon's damage bonus.

Disarm (Dex + Melee Weapons): Your character uses a weapon to knock or twist another weapon or object out or an enemy's grip. You must score as many successes as his Strength score. The opponent can use an action to defend with a clinch or a Dex + Melee Weapons roll as well.

Great Blow (Dex + Melee Weapons): A great blow uses a wide swing or deep stance that increases the shot's power at the expense of speed. You may take a dice pool penalty up to your Melee Weapons skill rank. If attack hits, convert the penalty to bonus damage dice.

Melee Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Damage Type	Range Increment (Thrown)	Size	Weight	Purchase DC	Notes
Common Weapons							
Brass knuckles	Str + 1	Stun	—	Light	1 lb.	5	Uses Unarmed Combat skill
Cleaver	Str + 2	Health	—	Light	2 lb.	5	Breaks easily
Club	Str + 2	Stun	10 ft.	Large 1-H	3 lb.	4	
Knife	Str + 1	Health	10 ft.	Light	1 lb.	7	Larger knives inflict 2 dmg.
Metal baton	Str + 3	Stun	—	Large 1-H	2 lb.	8	
Pistol whip	Str + 1	Stun	—	Light	—	—	
Rifle butt	Str + 2	Stun	—	2-H	—	—	
Sap	Str + 2	Stun	—	Light	3 lb.	2	
Stun gun	Str + 3	Electricity	—	Light	1 lb.	5	
Tonfa	Str + 1	Stun	—	Large 1-H	2 lb.	6	+2 to block; uses Unarmed combat for blocking
Exotic Blades							
Bayonet (fixed)	Str + 2	Health	—	2-H	1 lb.	7	
Hatchet	Str + 2	Health	10 ft.	Light	4 lb.	4	
Longsword	Str + 4	Health	—	Large 1-H	4 lb.	11	
Machete	Str + 2	Health	—	Light	2 lb.	5	Cheap models break easily
Rapier	Str + 3	Health	—	Large 1-H	3 lb.	10	
Spear	Str + 4	Health	—	2-H	9 lb.	6	
Straight razor	Str + 1	Health	—	Light	0.5 lb.	4	Breaks easily, unwieldy: –1 to attack pool
Sword cane	Str + 2	Health	—	Large 1-H	3 lb.	9	
Other Unusual Weapons							

Chain	Str + 2	Stun	—	2-H	5 lb.	5	+1 to disarm or clinch; no clinching penalty.
Chain saw	Str + 4	Health	—	2-H	10 lb.	9	
Kama	Str + 2	Health	—	Light	2 lb.	5	+1 to disarm
Katana	Str + 4	Health	—	2-H	6 lb.	12	Cheap replicas equivalent to machete or club.

Firearms

Firearms attacks (and other ranged attacks) have a range increment. Attacks suffer a –2 dice pool penalty for each range increment beyond the first.

Aimed Shot (Sen + Firearms): Your character uses your weapon's sights or scope from a composed shooting stance. The character can't move more than five feet or so on any turn in which she employs an aimed shot. Aimed shots also allow a character to make use of a bipod or telescopic sight. Finally, the character can elect to simply aim at a particular person or five foot wide area (the latter is sometimes called *overwatch*) without firing. Each turn of aiming without shooting adds a die to the character's dice pool against the target. You can delay for as many turns as the character's Wisdom score.

An aimed shot inflicts base damage equal to the weapon's rating.

Combat Shot (Dex + Firearms): This maneuver covers all instinctive forms of shooting. Shooting on the run or from the hip uses this maneuver. Characters can't spend multiple turns aiming on a combat shot. A combat shot inflicts base damage equal to the weapon's rating.

Short Burst (Dex or Sen + Firearms): The character fires a three round burst from a weapon capable of burst fire. Resolve this just like a standard aimed or combat shot, but add two dice to your dice pool. The attack uses three rounds. Weapons with two or four round bursts would add +1 die and +3 dice, respectively.

Long Burst (Dex or Sen + Firearms): The character empties the magazine from a fully automatic weapon on a single target. This either adds 10 dice to the weapon's attack pool or one less than all the remaining rounds in the magazine – whichever is less. If the character's using belt-fed ammunition, the character uses up 10+1d10 bullets or all remaining rounds, whichever is less. If fewer than 10 rounds remain, add the number of bullets as dice, instead of a flat 10.

You may not employ a long burst as part of a multiple action. The exact dice pool depends on whether the character is basing it on an aimed shot or combat shot.

Strafe (Dex + Firearms): The character empties the magazine from a fully automatic weapon against multiple adjacent targets. This either adds 10 dice

to the weapon's attack pool or as many dice as the remaining rounds in the magazine – whichever is less. If the character's using belt-fed ammunition, the character uses up the lesser of 10+1d10 bullets or the belt's remaining rounds.

After calculating the strafe attempt's dice pool, split that pool between each target in a group. You must even devote at least one die to targets you don't want to hit if they're between targets you do want to hit. Roll each section of the dice pool as a separate attack against its target. These take place virtually simultaneously. The base damage + success threshold of the attack applies to each target.

Ranged Weapons

Pistol	**Damage**	**Damage Type**	**Range Increment**	**Magazine**	**Size**	**Weight**
Beretta 92F (9mm autoloader)	3	Health	40 ft.	15 box	Light	3 lb.
Beretta 93R (9mm machine pistol)	3	Health	30 ft.	20 box	Large 1-H	3 lb.
Colt Double Eagle (10mm autoloader)	3	Health	30 ft.	9 box	Light	3 lb.
Colt M1911 (.45 autoloader)	4	Health	30 ft.	7 box	Light	3 lb.
Desert Eagle (.50AE autoloader)	5	Health	40 ft.	8 box	Large 1-H	4 lb.
Glock 17 (9mm autoloader)	3	Health	30 ft.	17 box	Light	2 lb.
Glock 20 (10mm autoloader)	4	Health	40 ft.	15 box	Light	3 lb.
Pathfinder (.22 revolver)	2	Health	20 ft.	6 cyl.	Light	1 lb.
Ruger Service-Six (.38S revolver)	3	Health	30 ft.	6 cyl.	Light	2 lb.
S&W M29 (.44 magnum revolver)	5	Health	30 ft.	6 cyl.	Large 1-H	3 lb.
SITES M9 (9mm autoloader)	3	Health	30 ft.	8 box	Light	2 lb.
TEC-9 (9mm machine pistol)	3	Health	40 ft.	32 box	Large 1-H	4 lb.
Rifle/Large Firearm						
AKM/AK-47 (7.62mmR assault rifle)	6	Health	70 ft.	30 box	2-H	10 lb.
Browning BPS (10-gauge shotgun)	7	Health	30 ft.	5 int.	2-H	11 lb.
HK G3 (7.62mm assault rifle)	6	Health	90 ft.	20 box	2-H	11 lb.
HK MP5K (9mm submachine gun)	3	Health	40 ft.	15 box	Large 1-H	5 lb.
HK PSG1[1] (7.62mm sniper rifle)	6	Health	90 ft.	5 box	2-H	16 lb.
M16A2 (5.56mm assault rifle)	5	Health	80 ft.	30 box	2-H	8 lb.
M4 Carbine (5.56mm assault rifle)	5	Health	60 ft.	30 box	2-H	7 lb.
M-60 (medium machine gun)	7	Health	100 ft.	Linked/Belt	Huge	22 lb.
Mossberg (12-	6	Health	30 ft.	6 int.	Large	7 lb.

gauge shotgun)						
Remington 700 (7.62mm hunting rifle)	6	Health	80 ft.	5 int.	Large	8 lb.
Sawed-off shotgun (12-ga shotgun)	6	Health	10 ft.	2 int.	Large 1-H	4 lb.
Winchester 94 (.444 hunting rifle)	7	Health	90 ft.	6 int.	Large	7 lb.
Other						
Compound bow	2	Health	40 ft.	—	Large	3 lb.
Crossbow	3	Health	40 ft.	1 int.	Large 1-H	7 lb.
Javelin	2	Health	30 ft.	—	Large 1-H	2 lb.
Pepper spray	2	Stun	5 ft.	1 int.	Light	0.5 lb.
Shuriken	1	Health	10 ft.	—	Light	0.5 lb.
Taser	3	Stun	5 ft.	1 int.	Light	2 lb.
Whip	1	Stun	5 ft. (15 max)	—	Light	2 lb.

Miscellaneous

Archery and Throwing (Dex + Athletics): Thrown objects, self bows and compound bows all use the Athletics skill. Crossbows use Firearms. A non-aerodynamic thrown object loses a die of damage for every range increment beyond the first that it travels. Arrows, spears and other aerodynamic objects don't suffer this penalty.

Attacking with Two Weapons (Dex + Melee Weapons): Characters with a weapon in each hand can attack with both in rapid succession. This is treated as a standard multiple action, except that the character can make two attacks in a row instead of waiting for all other combatants to act first.

Defenses

Block (Dex + Unarmed Combat): You may block unarmed or melee weapon attacks by batting them away with your hands, legs or body. A block does not completely ward off a blow, but does reduce its effectiveness. Add the margin of success to your Stun Toughness rating when it comes to stripping damage from a Stun attack. Add *half* of the margin of success to your Health Toughness against armed melee attacks. Blocks are much less effective against lethal attacks.

Clinch (Str + Unarmed Combat): You may employ a clinch (above) as a defense against an unarmed attack at no penalty, an attack with a light weapon at a –2 dice pool penalty, an attack with large one-handed weapon at a –4 dice penalty and an attack with a two-handed weapon at a –6 penalty. If you succeed the attack has no effect and the defender successfully applies a clinch attack.

Dodge (Dex + Dodge): Characters may not dodge while being clinched. If your Dodge successes meet or exceed the successes of an armed, unarmed or firearm attack, the attack misses.

In the case of firearms attacks, the character must run at least 10 feet during the turn and must be able to see his attacker clearly – not just the direction of fire.

Escape (Dex + Unarmed Combat): Use this maneuver to escape a clinch or lock. If your character's escape successes meet or exceed the lock or clinch attack's successes you break the opponent's grip on you.

Parry (Dex + Melee Weapons): Your character can use a weapon to deflect melee weapon or unarmed attacks. If your successes match or exceed the attack roll, your character parries the blow

Seek Cover: Characters can seek cover or drop to the ground, reducing their profile. This is resolved through standard movement.

Cover is either soft (the attack would mostly pass through it) or hard (it stops the bullet, arrow or other attack) Cover has the following effects on ranged attacks:

Cover Ratings

Type (Example)	Soft/Hard Cover Dice Pool Penalty

One quarter (standing behind parked car)	–1/–2
One Half (shooting from behind a wall)	–2/–4
Three quarters (dropping to a lying position)	–3/–6
Nine-tenths (sniper's blind, arrow slit)	–4/–8

Number of Actions

Multiple actions are often a critical part of action scenes. Choose whether your character's performing one action or more in the turn when she first acts in the turn. Choose between these options:

Single Action: Resolve the character's action. She may not act again until the next turn. Remember that if you choose this option, you can't normally defend against attacks for the rest of the turn.

Multiple Actions: Resolve the character's action at a –2 dice pool penalty. After all other characters have acted once (or forfeited, or are unable to act) the character can take another action. All characters able to take this second action go in Initiative order as usual. This action suffers a –4 dice pool penalty. Continue to take extra actions at a cumulative additional –2 dice penalty (–6, b –8, –10, and so on) for each extra action cycle. If your character's unmodified dice pool would be lowered to 0 or less by multiple action penalties alone, your character may not attempt the action at all.

As mentioned, the exception to this is when the character defends against an attack. You can use multiple defense actions whenever they would apply, as many times in a series of actions as you like.

Total Defense: You must declare this when your character first defends himself (with a dodge, escape, block, etc.) and cannot have attacked or performed other actions requiring dice rolls in that turn. If you opt for total defense, you may make multiple defense rolls at a cumulative –1 penalty instead of a cumulative –2 penalty. Thus, your first defense roll would suffer a –1 dice pool penalty, and subsequent rolls would suffer a –2, –3, –4, –5 and so on.

Vehicles

For simply traveling from point to point, the vehicle used is largely a matter of personal style and finances. Skill checks are only required in extraordinary circumstances. These rules are primarily focused on ground vehicles—cars, trucks, and light military vehicles. The rules can be modified for boats, heavier armored vehicles, and aircraft.

Characters in Vehicles

A character in a vehicle fills one of several possible roles, which determines what the character can do.

Driver: The driver of the vehicle controls its movement. Most vehicles have only one position from where the vehicle can be driven, so the person seated there is the driver. There can be only one driver in a vehicle at one time. Driving is an action, so attacking or performing other actions while driving incurs multiple action penalties.

Gunner: Some vehicles have built-in weapons. If such a weapon is controlled from a location other than the driver's position, a character can man that position and become the gunner. A vehicle can have as many gunners as it has gunner positions.

Passenger: All other personnel aboard the vehicle are considered passengers. Passengers have no specific role in the vehicle's operation, but may be able to fire weapons from the vehicle or take other actions.

Facing and Firing Arcs

Unlike with characters, when dealing with vehicles, the vehicle's facing (the direction it's pointing) is important. Facing indicates the direction in which the vehicle is traveling (assuming it's not moving in reverse). It can also determine which weapons aboard the vehicle can be brought to bear on a target.

A weapon built into a vehicle can by mounted to fire in one of four directions —forward, aft (rear), right, or left—or be built into a partial or full turret. A partial turret lets a weapon fire into three adjacent fire arcs (such as forward, left, and right), while a full turret lets it fire in any direction. For vehicles with weapons, a weapon's arc of fire is given in the vehicle's description.

Initiative

There are two options for determining initiative in vehicle combat. First, is individual Initiative just as in normal combat, where each character rolls separately. This is probably the best method if most or all characters are aboard the same vehicle, but it can result in a lot of delayed or readied actions as passengers wait for drivers to perform maneuvers. An alternative is to roll initiative for each vehicle, using the driver's Initiative modifier. This is particularly appropriate when characters are in separate vehicles, since it allows everyone aboard the same vehicle to act more or less simultaneously.

Vehicle Speed

Vehicle speed is expressed in five categories: stationary, alley speed, street speed, highway speed, and all-out. Each of these speed categories

represents a range of possible movement (see Table: Vehicle Speeds and Modifiers). Each turn, a vehicle moves according to its current speed category.

Vehicle Speeds and Modifiers

Speed Category	Move per Turn	*Turn Number	Defense Bonus	DrivePool Mod.
Stationary	0	n/a	0	n/a
Alley speed	5-100 feet	5 feet	0	0
Street speed	101-200 feet	10 feet	+1	0
Highway speed	200-500 feet	20 feet	+2	–1
All-out	501+ feet	50 feet	+3	–2

* The number of feet a vehicle must move at this speed before making a turn.

Declaring Speed

At the beginning of his or her action, a driver must declare his or her speed category for the turn. The driver can choose to go one category faster or slower than the vehicle's speed category at the end of the previous turn. A stationary vehicle can change to alley speed in either forward or reverse. Most vehicles cannot go faster than alley speed in reverse.

Stationary: The vehicle is motionless.

Alley Speed: This speed is used for safely maneuvering a vehicle in tight spaces, such as alleys and parking garages. It tops out at about the speed a typical person can run.

Street Speed: The vehicle is traveling at a moderate speed, up to about 35 miles per hour.

Highway Speed: The vehicle is moving at a typical highway speed, from about 35 to 80 miles per hour.

All-Out: The vehicle is traveling extremely fast, more than 80 miles per hour.

Moving

Each turn, move the vehicle a distance within its speed category. The driver chooses the exact distance. Every vehicle has a top speed, included in its statistics. A vehicle cannot move faster than its top speed. This means that some vehicles cannot move at all-out speed, or even highway speed.

The Effects of Speed

A fast-moving vehicle is harder to hit than a stationary one—but it's also harder to control, and to attack from. When a vehicle travels at street speed or faster, it gains a bonus to defensive Dex + Drive checks. However, that speed brings along with it a penalty on physical Skill pools used by characters aboard the vehicle—including Drive rolls to control the vehicle and attacks made from it.

Driving a Vehicle

Driving is an action for multiple action purposes whether the driver needs to make a Skill roll or not. The driver can attempt maneuvers to change the vehicle's course or speed. These maneuvers can be attempted at any point along the vehicle's route. The driver can choose to attack or attempt additional maneuvers at standard penalties.

The two kinds of vehicle movement are simple maneuvers and stunts.

Simple Maneuvers: A simple maneuver, such as a 45-degree turn, is easy to perform. However, simple maneuvers do cost movement—so a vehicle that makes a lot of simple maneuvers will not get as far as one going in a straight line. Simple maneuvers do not require the driver to make Skill rolls.

Stunts: Stunts are difficult and sometimes daring maneuvers that enable a driver to change his or her vehicle's speed or heading more radically than a simple maneuver allows. Stunts always require Drive rolls.

Simple Maneuvers

During a vehicle's movement, the driver can perform any one of the following maneuvers.

45-Degree Turn: Any vehicle can make a simple 45-degree turn as part of its movement. The vehicle must move forward at least a number of feet equal to its turning number before it can turn. Making a 45-degree turn costs 50 feet or 50% of the vehicle's movement (whichever is less).

Ram: Ramming another vehicle requires a simple maneuver. The driver moves his or her vehicle into the other vehicle's space and states that he or she is attempting to ram. Resolve the ram as a collision, except that the driver of the target vehicle can make a Dex + Drive roll to reduce damage to his own vehicle by 1 point per success.

Sideslip: A driver might wish to move to the side without changing the vehicle's facing, for instance to change lanes. This simple maneuver, called a sideslip, allows a vehicle to avoid obstacles or weave in and out of traffic without changing facing. A sideslip moves a vehicle up to 50 feet forward and 50 feet to the right or left, and costs 100 feet of movement. It can't be attempted at base speeds of less than 150 feet per turn (before adjustments).

Stunts

Stunts are maneuvers that require a Drive roll to perform successfully. Unsuccessful stunts often result in the vehicle ending up someplace other than where the driver intended. When this happens, the vehicle collides with any objects in its path. Remember that the vehicles speed modifies Skill rolls accordingly.

Avoid Hazard: Vehicle combat rarely occurs on a perfectly flat, featureless plain. When a vehicle tries to move through a square occupied by a hazard, the driver must succeed on a Dex + Drive roll to avoid the hazard and continue moving.

Structures simply cannot be avoided. Also, if a driver cannot make a roll (if he or she has used all his or her actions for the turn in performing other stunts), he or she automatically fails to avoid the hazard. In such cases, a collision occurs.

The Difficulty to avoid a hazard varies with the nature of the hazard. On a failed roll, the vehicle hits the obstacle. For caltrops, this means the caltrops make an attack against the vehicle (see Caltrops). An oil slick forces the drive to make a Drive roll (Difficulty 2) to retain control of the vehicle (see Losing Control). Failing to avoid an object results in a collision with the object (see Collisions and Ramming).

Hazard	Difficulty
Caltrops	2
Oil slick	2
Objects	
Light (tire, light debris)	1
Medium-sizes (crate)	2
Large (pile of wreckage)	3
Building	Cannot be

avoided

Bootleg Turn: By making a bootleg turn, a driver can radically change direction without turning in a loop. However, in so doing, the vehicle comes to a stop.

Before a vehicle can make a bootleg turn, it must move in a straight line at least a distance equal to its turn number. To make a bootleg turn, simply change the vehicle's facing to the desired direction. The vehicle ends its movement in that location, at stationary speed.

The Difficulty for a bootleg turn depends on the change in facing.

Facing Change	Difficulty
45 degrees	1
90 degrees	2
135 degrees	3
180 degrees	4

On a failed roll, instead of facing the desired direction, the vehicle only changes facing by 45 degrees. Make a Drive roll to retain control against a Difficulty equal to the Difficulty for the bootleg turn attempted (see Losing Control).

Dash: With a dash stunt, a driver can increase the vehicle's speed by one category. (This increase is in addition to any speed change made at the beginning of the driver's action; if the driver increased speed at that time, he or she can accelerate a total of two categories in the same turn.) The vehicle's total movement for the turn cannot exceed the maximum distance for its new speed category. (The squares it has already moved before attempting the dash count against this total.)

The Difficulty for a dash is 2 on a Dex + Drive roll. The driver can only succeed at one dash per turn.

On a failed roll, the vehicle does not change speed categories.

Hard Brake: With a hard brake stunt, a driver can reduce the vehicle's speed by up to two categories. (This is in addition to any speed change made at the beginning of his action; if the driver reduced speed at that time, he or she can drop a total of three categories in the same turn.) The vehicle's movement for the turn ends as soon as it has moved distance for its new speed category. (If it has already moved that far before attempting the hard brake, it ends its movement immediately.)

The Difficulty for a hard brake is 2 on a Dex + Drive roll. The driver can only succeed at one hard break per turn.

On a failed roll, the vehicle does not change speed categories. Make a Dex + Drive roll (Difficulty 2) to retain control (see Losing Control).

Hard Turn: A hard turn allows a vehicle to make a turn in a short distance without losing speed. A hard turn functions like a 45-degree turn simple

maneuver, except that the vehicle only needs to move half of the normal turning distance.

The Difficulty for a hard turn is 2. On a failed roll, the vehicle turns normally. Make a Drive roll (Difficulty 2) to retain control (see Losing Control).

Jump: A driver can attempt to jump his or her vehicle across a gap in his or her path.

To make a jump, the vehicle must move in a straight at a distance equal to its turning amount. If the vehicle doesn't have enough movement left to clear the gap, it must complete the jump at the start of its next turn.

The Difficulty for a jump depends on the width of the gap, modified by the vehicle's speed category.

Gap Width	Difficulty
1–3 ft. (ditch)	2
4–8 ft. (culvert)	3
8–15 ft. (creek, small ravine)	4
16–25 ft. (narrow road, small pond)	6
26–40 ft. (wide road, small river)	8

Vehicle Speed Category	Difficulty Modifier
Alley speed	+2
Street speed	+1
Highway speed	0
All-out	–1

On a failed roll, the vehicle fails to clear the gap, and instead falls into it (or collides with the far side). Determine damage as for a collision (see Collisions and Ramming).

Sideswipe: During a vehicle's movement, a driver can attempt to sideswipe a vehicle or other target, either to deal damage without fully ramming it or to cause another driver to lose control of his or her vehicle.

At character scale, a vehicle must be side by side with its target and moving in the same direction. Attempting a sideswipe costs 50 feet of movement.

If the stunt is successful, the sideswiping vehicle and the target both suffer collision damage with a 1/4 multiplier. Make a Dex + Drive roll. If it succeeds, the defender must make a Dex + Drive roll (Difficulty 2) to maintain control of his vehicle.

On a failed roll, both vehicles take damage as though the sideswipe attempt was a success. However, the other driver does not need to make a roll to retain control.

Driver Options

Here is what a vehicle driver can do in a single turn:

Change the Vehicle's Speed: The driver may increase or decrease his or her vehicle's speed category by one (or keep it the same).

Movement: Move the vehicle as fast or as slow as possible for the vehicle, within the chosen speed category.

Other Action: The first stunt or maneuver in a turn is considered part of the act of driving. If the driver makes more than one such action per turn, multiple action penalties accrue.

Collisions and Ramming

A collision occurs when a vehicle strikes another vehicle or a solid object. Generally, when a vehicle collides with a creature or other moving vehicle, the target can attempt a Dex + Drive roll to reduce the damage by one die per success. Characters can avoid being hit with a Dex + Athletics roll with a Difficulty of 1 for accidental crashes. If the pilot is trying to hit the victim, the roll opposes the driver's Dex + Drive roll. The target's defense pool suffers a –1 penalty for every speed category above alley speed.

A Critical failure to leap out of the way or other adverse situation can cause the character to get run over. This inflicts *double* damage.

Resolving Collisions

The base damage dealt by a vehicle collision depends on the speed and size of the objects involved. Use the highest speed and the smallest size of the two colliding objects and refer to the following table:

Collision Damage

Highest Speed	*Damage Dice (Stun)*
Alley speed	2
Street speed	4
Highway speed	8
All-out	16
Human-sized	0
Motorcycle-sized	+2
Car-Sized	+4
Van/SUV-sized	+6
Truck-sized	+8
18-Wheeler-sized	+10
Tank-sized	+12

After finding the base damage, determine the collision's damage dice multiplier based on how the colliding vehicle struck the other vehicle or object. (For vehicles moving in reverse, consider the back end to be the vehicle's "front" for determining the collision multiplier.) Consult Table: Collision Direction for a multiplier. Round fractions up.

Once the damage has been determined, apply it to both vehicles (or objects or creatures) involved in the collision. Both vehicles reduce their speed by two speed categories. If the colliding vehicle moved the minimum number of squares for its new speed category before the collision, it ends its movement immediately. If not, it pushes the other vehicle or object aside, if possible, and continues until it has moved the minimum number of squares for its new speed category.

Collision Direction

Colliding Vehicle's Target	*Multiplier*
A stationary object	X 1

A moving vehicle, striking head-on or 45 degrees from head-on	X 2
A moving vehicle, striking perpendicular	X 1
A moving vehicle, striking from the rear or 45 degrees from the rear	X ½
A vehicle being sideswiped (see Sideswipe)	X ¼

The driver of the vehicle that caused the collision must immediately make a Dex + Drive roll (Difficulty 2) or lose control of the vehicle (see Losing Control, below). The driver of the other vehicle must succeed on a Dex + Drive roll (Difficulty 2) at the beginning of his or her next action or lose control of his or her vehicle.

Damage to Vehicle Occupants

When a vehicle takes damage from a collision, its occupants may take damage as well. The base amount of damage depends on the cover offered by the vehicle and the positions of occupants.

Cover	Damage Dice
None (motorcycle)	Full
One-quarter (golf cart)	–2
One-half (sedan)	–4
Three-quarters or more (SUV)	–8
No seatbelt/harness	+2
Precarious positions (standing, leaning out window)	+4

Losing Control

A collision or a failed stunt can cause a driver to lose control of his vehicle. In these cases, the driver must make a Dex + Drive roll (Difficulty 2) to retain control of the vehicle. If this roll is successful, the driver maintains control of the vehicle. If it fails, the vehicle goes into a spin. If the driver scores no successes at all, the vehicle rolls. Remember that the dice pool modifier to speed applies to all Drive checks.

An out-of-control vehicle may strike an object or other vehicle. When that happens, a collision occurs (see Collisions and Ramming, above).

Spin: The vehicle skids, spinning wildly.

At character scale, the vehicle moves as far as the turning number for its speed, then ends its movement facing in a random direction.

Roll: The vehicle tumbles, taking damage, in a straight line moves as far as the turning distance for its speed, then ends its movement facing in a random direction. The vehicle and occupants suffer damage dice equal to a crash with another vehicle of the same size.

Hide and Seek

When being pursued, a driver can attempt a Wis + Drive roll to lose the pursuer in heavy traffic, or a Gra + Drive roll to misdirect the pursuer before turning onto an off-ramp or a side street. This is opposed by the pursuer's Sen + Drive roll. Subtract dice from a driver's pool if she's attempting to hide among smaller vehicles; add dice if nearby vehicles are larger. If the driver's misdirecting the pursuer, subtract one die from the pursuer's Drive roll for every success by which the evader exceeds the pursuer.

Fighting from Vehicles

Drivers and pilots can attack and drive using the normal penalties for multiple actions. Passengers can act as they choose, though the vehicle's speed category will alter many dice pools. Attackers can target vehicles or specific vehicle occupants. An attack against a vehicle occupant is made like any other attack. Remember, however, that a character in a vehicle gains bonuses to Defense from both the vehicle's speed and any cover it provides. When a character fires from a vehicle, objects or other vehicles in the way can provide cover for the target.

Damaging Vehicles

All vehicles have Structure Points, which are roughly equivalent to a character's Health or Stun Points. Vehicles also have Toughness. Whenever a vehicle takes damage, subtract the vehicle's Toughness from the damage dealt.

When a vehicle is reduced to 0 Structure, it is disabled. Although it might be repairable, it ceases functioning. A vehicle that is disabled while moving drops one speed category per turn until it comes to a stop. The driver cannot attempt any maneuvers except a 45-degree turn. A vehicle is destroyed when it loses Structure equal to twice its full normal total. A destroyed vehicle cannot be repaired.

Name	Crew	Pass.	Cargo	Init.	Drive/ Pilot Pool Mod.	Top Speed	Tough.	Structure
Aircraft								
Bell Model 212 (helicopter)	2	13	5,000 lb.	–3	–3	200(100 feet/turn)	5	26
Cessna 172 Skyhawk (prop plane)	1	3	120 lb.	–3	–3	210 (105)	5	20
Learjet Model 45 (corporate jet)	2	10	500 lb.	–3	–3	1,100 (550)	5	34
Cars								
Acura 3.2 TL (mid-size sedan)	1	4	300 lb.	–2	–1	265 (123 feet/turn)	5	24
Chevrolet Cavalier (economy coupe)	1	4	275 lb.	–1	–1	185 (93 feet/turn)	5	20
Chevrolet Corvette (sports coupe)	1	1	250 lb.	–2	+0	310 (155 feet/turn)	5	22
Dodge Neon (economy sedan)	1	4	275 lb.	–1	–1	220 (110 feet/turn)	5	20
Ford Crown Victoria (mid-size sedan)	1	5	425 lb.	–2	–1	185 (93 feet/turn)	5	24
Jaguar XJS (luxury sedan)	1	4	275 lb.	–2	–1	230 (115 feet/turn)	5	24
Volkswagen Jetta (mid-size wagon)	1	4	275 lb.	–2	+0	230 (115 feet/turn)	5	22
Motorcycles								
Ducati 998R (racing bike)	1	0	0 lb.	+0	+2	370 (185 feet/turn)	5	8
Harley Davidson FLSTF (street bike)	1	1	0 lb.	–1	+1	275 (138 feet/turn)	5	12
Yamaha YZ250F (dirt bike)	1	1	0 lb.	+0	+2	165 (83 feet/turn)	5	8
Trucks								
AM General Hummer (SUV)	1	3	1,000 lb.	–2	–2	140 (70 feet/turn)	5	28
Ford Escape XLT (SUV)	1	4	300 lb.	–2	–2	200 (100 feet/turn)	5	22
Ford F-150 XL (pickup)	1	2	1,700 lb.	–2	–2	175 (88 feet/turn)	5	26
Water Vehicles								
Bayliner 1802 Capri (runabout)	1	5	2,100 lb.	–2	–2	55 (28 feet/turn)	5	18
Fairline Targa 30 (cabin cruiser)	1	3	2,100 lb.	–3	–3	80 (40 feet/turn)	5	30
Sea-Doo XP (personal watercraft)	1	1	60 lb.	–1	+1	105 (53 feet/tur	5	12

As noted in Chapter One, every human character has 8 Stun Points and 8 Health Points and Constitution-based Toughness that reduces an attack's basic damage.

To record damage, subtract the character's Toughness from the damage dice. Treat any result of less than 1 as 1 *unless* the character has twice as much Toughness as the unmodified number of damage dice. Some characters are tough enough to shrug off minor injuries, but most can be injured by any significant blow.

Roll the final total as a pool. Subtract the results from the victim's Stun or Health Points.

Example: *With a Con of 4, Michael's got a Health Toughness of 2. He's also wearing an undercover vest, raising it to 5. If someone shoots him and the raw damage is 7 dice, he only suffers 2 dice of damage (7–5). If the raw damage is 4 dice he still suffers 1 die of damage, even though his effective Toughness is greater. If the raw damage is only 2 dice, he can ignore it completely because his 5 Toughness is more than double the incoming damage.*

Characters who've sustained 8 points of either type of damage cannot move or act unless they spend 1 point of Will per turn to stay active. Fortunately, this expenditure wards off wound penalties as well.

If a character loses all of her Stun Points, any remaining damage removes Health Points instead. At 9 points of Health damage she'll die unless she gets medical attention by the end of the scene. Characters who suffer 10 or more points of Health damage die instantly.

Recovery

If characters strenuously exert themselves over an eight hour period (through combat, feats of strength or exposure to supernatural horror) they recover no more than a single Stun Point. Resting characters recover 1 Stun Point per hour.

A resting character recovers a number of Health Points equal to his Constitution at the rate of 1 per week. After that, he recovers remaining lost Health at the rate of 1 point per month. A character who doesn't rest recovers every Health Point at the rate of 1 per month.

Characters can use Treat Injury to speed recovery. See Chapter Two for details.

Attribute Injuries

Some hazards inflict Attribute injuries. These recover at the same rate as lost Health unless otherwise specified.

A character with a Constitution of 0 dies. A 0 in any other score means the character is helpless and cannot move.

Sources of Injury

Combat is the most common source of injury in an action-oriented game but there are plenty of other ways to suffer and die. The following systems cover non-combat injuries.

Disease

When a character is exposed to a treatable disease she must make an immediate Constitution + Stoicism roll. The victim must make this roll when she comes into contact with an infectious carrier, touches an item smeared with diseased matter, consumes food or drink tainted with a disease, or suffers damage from a contaminated attack. If the character succeeds, the disease has no effect on him or her—the character's immune system fights off the infection. If the character fails the roll, she takes damage after an incubation period; once per day thereafter, the character must succeed at a Constitution + Stoicism roll to avoid secondary damage. Two successful rolls in a row indicate that the character has fought off the disease and recovers.

The characteristics of some treatable diseases are summarized on the Sample Diseases table.

Type: The disease's method of delivery—ingested, inhaled, or via an injury—and the successes needed to resist. Some injury diseases can be transmitted by a wound as small as an insect bite. Most diseases that are inhaled can also be ingested (and vice versa).

Incubation Period: The amount of time before initial damage takes effect (if the victim fails his roll).

Initial Damage: The damage the victim takes after the incubation period.

Secondary Damage: The amount of damage the character takes one day after suffering initial effects, if he fails a second roll. This damage is taken each day the roll fails.

Sample Diseases

Disease	Type	Incubation Period	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage
Anthrax	Inhaled/Injury DC 16	1d2 days	1 Con	Con (dice pool 4)*
Smallpox	Inhaled/Contact DC 15	1d10/2 days	1 Str and 1 Con	Str (dice pool 3) and Con (dice pool 4)
Pneumonia	Inhaled DC 12	1d10/2+1 days	1 Str	Str (dice pool 3) and Con (dice pool 3)
Hantavirus	Injury DC 14	1 day	1 Str	Str (dice pool 4) and Con (dice pool 4)
Necrotizing faciitis	Contact DC 13	1d10/2+1 days	1 Con	Con (dice pool 6)
West Nile virus	Injury DC 12	1d10/2 days	1 Dex and 1 Con	Dex (dice pool 3) and Con (dice pool 3)
Salmonella	Ingested DC 13	1 day	1 Str and 1 Dex	Str (dice pool 2) and Con (dice pool 4)

*If damage is sustained, make a second roll to avoid 1 rank being permanently drained (instead of damaged).

Falling

Characters suffer 1 die of Stun damage per yard fallen for the first 25 yards and 1 die of Health damage for the next 25, for a maximum of 25 Stun and 25 Health dice of damage. Each success on a Dexterity + Athletics roll strips one die from each applicable damage pool. The point of impact can add or subtract damage, since landing in a trash bin full of broken glass would obviously hurt more than landing on a gymnastics mat.

Heat and Cold

Heat and cold deal damage that cannot be recovered until the character counteracts or escapes the inclement temperature.

A character not properly equipped to counteract the heat or cold must attempt a Constitution + Survival roll each hour (Difficulty 3). Failure means that the character loses 1 Stun point regardless of Toughness. Heavy clothing or armor provides a 1 die penalty on rolls against heat but grants a +1 die bonus against cold.

Searing heat or bitter cold (desert or arctic conditions) force a character to make a roll every 10 minutes instead of every hour.

Open flame inflicts Health damage. Burning a hand inflicts as little as 1 die of damage; being engulfed in ordinary fire inflicts 10 dice of damage per turn. Fires last for as long as there’s fuel to burn.

Characters can put themselves out by devoting a turn to rolling and patting out the fire. This requires a Dexterity + Prudence roll. Each success strips a die from the fire’s dice pool. When the dice are gone, the fire is out. A character can also immerse a burning object o body part water to automatically put it out.

Poison

When a character takes damage from an attack with a poisoned weapon, touches an item smeared with contact poison, consumes a poisonous substance, inhales a poisonous gas, or is otherwise poisoned, the character must make a Constitution roll for each dose. If the character fails, he or she takes the poison's initial damage (usually ability damage) or suffers its other effects. Even if the character succeeds, he or she typically faces secondary effects one minute later. This secondary damage also requires a Constitution roll to avoid. Multiple doses have cumulative effects.

Poisons are detailed in the Craft skill description in Chapter Two.

Poisonous liquids are usually administered through injection or by application to a weapon. Poisonous gases must be inhaled to be effective. Poisonous solids are usually ingested with food or drink.

Suffocation and Drowning

Characters can hold their breath for a number of turns equal to their Constitution + Stoicism *and* the successes on a Constitution + Stoicism roll. After that, they suffer 1 point of Stun damage per turn, regardless of Toughness, and automatically fall unconscious after losing all Stun points. The character can't spend Will to stay conscious. After a number of additional turns equal to the character's Constitution, he dies.

Armor

Armor adds a bonus to the character's Toughness but it can also be heavy and bulky. Heavier armor reduces Dexterity-based dice pools and movement speeds.

Some armor listings have two Toughness bonuses listed. In this case, the first bonus applies to Stun attacks and muscle-powered weapons (knives, swords, arrows and so on). The bonus after the slash applies to bullets and comparable high-velocity attacks (crossbow bolts, shards of metal propelled by extreme psychokinesis, etc.).

Armor doesn't usually provide a Toughness bonus against area effects, temperature extremes or electrocution. The GM or group may allow partial protection if the armor offers insulation and/or full body protection.

Armor

Armor	*Toughness Bonus*	*Dex. Pool Penalty*	*Speed (feet.)*	*Weight*
Light Armor				
Leather jacket	+1/0	0	30	4 lb.
Leather armor	+2/0	–1	30	15 lb.
Light undercover shirt	+2	0	30	2 lb.
Pull-up pouch vest	+2	0	30	2 lb.
Undercover vest	+3	–1	30	3 lb.
Medium Armor				
Concealable vest	+4	–1	25	4 lb.
Chainmail shirt	+5/+1	–2	20	40 lb.
Light-duty vest	+5	–2	25	8 lb.
Tactical vest	+6	–3	25	10 lb.
Heavy Armor				
Special response vest	+7	–3	20	15 lb.
Plate mail	+8/+3	–4	20	50 lb.
Forced entry unit	+9	–4	20	20 lb.

Madness

Madness is a danger for anyone who would investigate the unknown. Supernatural evil can damage characters' mental health, but so can ordinary crime scenes, personal traumas and encounters with things that aren't evil but are just too *alien* for the human mind to process. In **Opening the Dark**, we simulate this with a character's Madness score.

There are five ranks of Madness:

1. Traumatized
2. Disturbed
3. Deranged
4. Insane
5. Psychotic

6. Lost to Madness

Characters gain ranks of Madness in three situations:

- They critically fail rolls to resist losing Ethos.
- They drop to 0 Ethos.
- They fail a Will roll in the face of a madness-inducing experience (see Disturbance Ratings, below).

Disturbance Ratings

A Disturbance Rating measures the intensity of a Madness-inducing stimulus. A crime scene, monster or occult book might each have their own Disturbance Ratings.

Subtract the character's Madness score from the Disturbance Rating. If the result is 0 or less, the situation poses no further threat to the character's sanity. He's already been too traumatized to be bothered by these little horrors. If the result is a positive number, that becomes the target number for a Will roll. If the roll succeeds, the character's mind steels itself against the threat. If it fails, the character earns a new rank of Madness.

Disturbance Rating	Sample Disturbance
1	Bleeding walls, almost dying from violence
2	Dismembered corpse, empty (but used) torture chamber
3	Witnessing a murder, Seeing a ghost
4	Seeing a shambling zombie, witnessing torture.
5	Being possessed, spending an extended period of time in a war zone
6	Alien horror.

Effects of Madness

At each rank, the character gains one disorder (see below). Disorders may change over time, adapting to the character's experiences. The player and GM can work out these changes when they feel it's appropriate.

At the 6th rank, remove the character from play. She's gone incurably insane. She may reappear as a mad oracle, a deranged cultist or a ward of the characters – a reminder that the world's secrets are nothing to be trifled with.

Fortunately, characters below the final rank of Madness lose one rank every time they increase Will or Ethos ranks (not just Will point recovery). Some supernatural abilities can also alleviate Madness.

Disorders

This section offers descriptions of many specific mental disorders. Where appropriate, specific game effects checks are also given. A disorder generally activates whenever the character is confronted with anything akin to the experience that increased her Madness, but some disorders are more or less constant. See the descriptions for suggestions.

Anxiety Disorders

The character suffers from a variety of physical and emotional symptoms that can be grouped into certain categories. Only one of these afflicts the character at any given time.

Motor Tension

Jitteriness, aches, twitches, restlessness, easily startled, easily fatigued, and so on. all Physical die rolls take a –1 penalty.

Expectations of Doom

Anxieties, worries, fears, and especially anticipations of misfortune. All Social die rolls suffer a –1 die penalty.

Vigilance

Distraction, inability to focus, insomnia, irritability, impatience. All Mental die rolls suffer a –1 die penalty.

Agoraphobia (Fear of Open Places)

The character becomes very nervous outside familiar surroundings and must make a Will roll in order to leave home or engage socially.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

This illness manifests in one of two main forms, obsessive thoughts or compulsive actions; some characters exhibit both.

Obsessions

The character cannot help thinking about an idea, image, or impulse incessantly, often involving violence and self-doubt. These ideas are frequently repugnant to the character, but they are so strong that during times of stress she may be unable to concentrate on anything else, even if doing so is necessary for her survival. Obsessive impulses can be very dangerous when combined with auditory hallucinations, since the “voices” may urge the character to take some dangerous or hostile course of action.

Compulsions

The character insists on performing ritual actions, such as touching a doorway at left, right, and top before passing through it. Though she may agree that the actions are senseless, the need to perform them is overpowering and may last for 1d10 turns. Even in times of great stress, the character may ignore her survival in order to perform the actions.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

After a traumatic event, perhaps even years later, the character begins to relive the trauma through persistent thoughts, dreams, and flashbacks. Correspondingly, the character loses interest in daily activities. She may return to normal once the memories have been thoroughly explored and understood, but that process may take years.

Phobia or Mania

A character afflicted by a phobia or a mania persistently fears a particular object or situation. She realizes that the fear is excessive and irrational, but the fear is disturbing enough that she avoids the stimulus.

Phobia

A Will roll is required for a character to be able to force herself into (or remain within) the presence of the object of her phobia, and even then the character takes a –1 die penalty to actions as long as the object of fear remains. In severe cases, the object of the phobia is imagined to be omnipresent, perhaps hidden—thus, someone with severe acrophobia (fear of heights) might be frightened when in an enclosed room on the upper story of a building, even if there were no window or other way to see how high up the room was.

Mania

Manias are rarer than phobias. A character affected by a mania is inordinately fond of a particular stimulus and takes great pains to be with it or near it. When the character’s sexuality is involved, the mania may be termed a fetish. Thus, teratophobia would be an inordinate fear of monsters, while teratophilia would be an unhealthy (possibly sexual) attraction to them.

Many real-world phobias and manias can easily be broadened to include monstrous creatures and specific magic effects in an occult setting. For

example, ophidiophobia (fear of snakes) could be extended to include medusae and other snakelike creatures, or ichthyophobia (fear of fish) could be extended to include aquatic creatures with fishlike qualities.

Dissociative Disorders

Individuals suffering from dissociative disorders cannot maintain a complete awareness of themselves, their surroundings, or time. The disorder often involves some great previous trauma that is too terrible to remember. Characters who have gone insane from an encounter with powerful monsters often suffer from some form of dissociative disorder.

Dissociative Amnesia (Psychogenic Amnesia)

This is the inability to recall important personal information, brought on by a desire to avoid unpleasant memories. The character must make a Will roll to recall such details or the cause of the amnesia.

Dissociative Fugue

The character flees from home or work and cannot recall her past. Once the flight halts, the character may assume an entirely new identity.

Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder)

The character appears to harbor more than one personality, each of which is dominant at times and has its own distinct behavior, name, and even gender. The player needs to keep track of the character's different personalities. (Each one has the same ability scores and game statistics, but different goals, outlooks, and attitudes.)

Intermittent Explosive Disorder

The character is recognizably impulsive and aggressive, and at times gives way to uncontrollable rages that result in assault or destruction of property.

Mood Disorders

These disorders affect the victim's attitude and outlook. Mild mood disorders can be almost impossible to detect without prolonged contact with an individual, but severe disorders usually have noticeable symptoms.

Depression

Symptoms of this illness include changes in appetite, weight gain or loss, too much or too little sleep, persistent feeling of tiredness or sluggishness, and feelings of worthlessness or guilt, leading in severe cases to hallucinations, delusions, stupor, or thoughts of suicide. All dice rolls suffer a -2 penalty. A predisposition to use alcohol or other mood-altering substances in an attempt at self-medication exists. A character suffering from severe chronic depression may give up virtually all effort from feelings of hopelessness—for example, deciding not to get out of bed for two years.

Mania

The character has a fairly constant euphoric or possibly irritable mood. Symptoms include a general increase in activity, talkativeness, increased self-esteem to the point of delusion, decreased need for sleep, being easily distracted, willingness for dangerous or imprudent activities such as reckless driving, delusions, hallucinations, and bizarre behavior. A predisposition to use alcohol or other substances in an attempt at self-medication exists.

Bipolar Mood Disorder

The character oscillates between mood states, sometimes staying in one mood for weeks at a time, sometimes rapidly switching from one to another. Also known as manic depressive.

Personality Disorders

These long-term disorders have almost constant effects on a character's behavior, making it difficult for him to interact with others and often making him unpleasant to be around as well. This is an important point to keep in mind when roleplaying— few players want to spend time with another player character suffering from a personality disorder.

Antisocial

Short-sighted and reckless behavior, habitual liar, confrontational, fails to meet obligations (job, bills, relationships), disregards rights and feelings of others.

Avoidant

Oversensitive to rejection, low self-esteem, socially withdrawn.

Borderline

Rapid mood shifts, impulsive, unable to control temper, chronic boredom.

Compulsive

Perfectionist, authoritarian, indecisive from fear of making mistakes, difficulty expressing emotions.

Dependent

Lacks self-confidence; seeks another to look up to, follow, and subordinate herself to ("codependent").

Histrionic

Overly dramatic, craves attention and excitement, overreacts, displays temper tantrums, may threaten suicide if thwarted.

Narcissistic

Exaggerated sense of self-importance, craves attention and admiration, considers others' rights and feelings as of lesser importance.

Passive-Aggressive

Procrastinator, stubborn, intentionally forgetful, deliberately inefficient. Sabotages own performance on a regular basis.

Paranoid

Jealous, easily offended, suspicious, humorless, secretive, vigilant; exaggerates magnitude of offenses against oneself, refuses to accept blame.

Schizoid

Emotionally cold, aloof, has few friends; indifferent to praise or criticism.

GMs should realize that, while these traits may work for an interesting NPC from whom the players must extract information or a favor, their antisocial nature makes them ill-suited for members of an adventuring party.

Other Psychotic Disorders

By some definitions, all severe mental illnesses are classified as psychoses, including mood disorders, dementia, and anxiety disorders. This section deals with some of the interesting behavioral syndromes that may turn up in your game.

Amok

"Running amok," an outburst of violence and aggressive or homicidal behavior directed at people and property. Amnesia, return to consciousness, and exhaustion occur following the episode. During a killing spree, the character utilizes whatever weapons are on hand.

Boufee Detirant

Sudden outburst of aggressive, agitated behavior and marked confusion, sometimes accompanied by visual and auditory hallucinations or paranoia.

Brain Fog

Impaired concentration and feelings of fatigue, pains in the neck and head, a sense that worms are crawling inside one's head.

Ghost Sickness

Weakness, loss of appetite, feelings of suffocation, nightmares, and a pervasive feeling of terror, attributed as a sending from witches or malign otherworldly powers.

Piblokto

"Arctic madness," wherein the afflicted rips off clothing and runs howling like an animal through the snow.

Taijin Kyofusho

“Face-to-face” phobia, an intense anxiety when in the presence of other people; fearfulness that one’s appearance, odor, or behavior is offensive.

“Voodoo” Death

Belief that a hex or curse can bring about misfortune, disability, and death through some spiritual mechanism. Often the victim self-fulfills the hexer’s prophecy by refusing to eat and drink, resulting in dehydration and starvation.

Wacinko

Anger, withdrawal, mutism, and immobility, leading to illness and suicide.

Wendigo Syndrome

The afflicted believes she is a personification of the Wendigo, a cannibalistic creature with an icy heart.

Shared Paranoid Disorder (Shared Delusional Disorder, Folie a Deux)

The character takes on the delusional system of another paranoid individual from being in close contact with that person.

Sleep Disorders

These disorders include insomnia (character has difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep) and narcolepsy (character frequently falls asleep, almost anywhere and at inappropriate times). Characters performing demanding tasks such as engaging in combat or casting a spell may, when stressed, need to make Difficulty 3 Concentration checks to stay awake and not put themselves in a dangerous situation.

Night Terrors

A sleeping character wakes after a few hours of sleep, usually screaming in terror. Pulse and breathing are rapid, pupils are dilated, and hair stands on end. The character is confused and hard to calm down. Night terrors are similar to ordinary nightmares, but much more intense and disruptive.

Somnambulism

Sleepwalking. As with night terrors, this behavior occurs in the first few hours of sleep. An episode may last up to 30 minutes. During the episode, the character’s face is blank and staring, and she can be roused only with difficulty. Once awake, she recalls nothing of the activity.

Somatoform Disorders

A somatoform disorder may be diagnosed when a character experiences physical symptoms that cannot be explained by an actual physical injury or disease.

Somatization Disorder

The character suffers from a physical ailment or diseaselike effect, with symptoms ranging from dizziness and impotence to blindness and intense pain. The Heal skill cannot identify any physical cause for the symptoms, and magical healing has no

effect. The victim does not believe that her symptoms represent a specific disease. All dice rolls take a -1 penalty.

Conversion Disorder

The character reports dysfunctions that suggest a physical disorder but, though they are involuntary, the symptoms actually provide a way for the victim to avoid something undesirable or a way to garner attention and caring, a condition called Munchausenism. Symptoms range from painful headaches to paralysis or blindness. With the condition known as Reverse Munchausenism, a character projects ill health onto others and may even arrange injuries or illnesses for them so that she can thereafter take care of them. All dice rolls take a -1 penalty.

Hypochondriasis

Character believes she suffers from a serious disease. No physical cause for reported symptoms can be found, but the character continues to believe that the disease or condition exists, often with serious consequences to her normal life.

Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Character suffers from perceived flaws in appearance, usually of the face, or of the hips or legs. Behavior may alter in unexpected ways to cover up the flaws or to calm anxieties.

Substance Abuse Disorder

A character with a substance abuse disorder finds solace in using a drug, becomes addicted to it, and spends much time maintaining, concealing, and indulging the habit. Drugs include alcohol, amphetamines, cocaine, hallucinogens, marijuana, nicotine, opium (especially morphine and heroin), sedatives, and more fantastic substances present in the campaign world.

Supernatural Powers

This chapter has three sections. First, we discuss supernatural Power Paths: the narrowly defined abilities of many mythic creatures. After that, we move on to freeform magic before concluding with guidelines for ghosts, demons and other spirits.

Power Paths

Many powers behave the same way every time they're used. They're usually possessed by creatures with innate rather than learned supernatural abilities, but it often takes training for these monsters to master their full potential. **Opening the Dark** calls these *Power Paths* but users devise their own names.

Each path has a rank level that defines its exact capabilities. In most cases, creatures learn each rank in order from lowest to highest. There might be exceptions, however. Some characters might pick up a higher ranked power right away because of a special origin. For instance, a werewolf might begin with the ability to change into a bestial hybrid form, but can't use other

forms of Natural Shapeshifting These situations are note in power descriptions.

Path powers often have a Charge cost. A Charge is an abstract unit. Its exact definition depends on the character's nature. A vampire gathers Charges from blood-borne Essence, while a demigod absorbs them from sacred places.

The following Power Paths below aren't the only ones around – they're just examples to get you started. Create your own when necessary. Change the ones below to suit your campaign whenever you please.

Mind Control

This power grants the ability to control another creature's thoughts and actions. It affects a single victim in the character's line of sight. In addition, the character must meet a specific simple condition (concentrate for a turn, touch the victim, gaze into a crystal, etc.). The exact condition depends on the power's origins.

Some characters (psychics, for instance) might purchase the third or fourth ranks of Mind Control out of order. This indicates special ability in one aspect of mind control. If the character does this he can't learn the higher ranks without purchasing previous ranks first. Depending on his origin, he might not be able to learn other ranks at all.

Action: Standard

Dice Pool: Charisma + Leadership vs. target's Will rank.

Price: 1 Charge

Duration: See Power

Rank 1: Issue a single command that is not obviously self-destructive, which the victim will obey for one turn.

Rank 2: Issue multiple commands that are not obviously self-destructive. The victim will carry these out for a full scene.

Rank 3: Command a subject to forget or falsely recall the events of scene.

Rank 4: Issue a command that will be carried out at some point in the future, either at a set date and time or in response to another preset condition.

Rank 5: Command a victim to perform any action that isn't self-destructive for a full day, or a self-destructive action (including a suicide attempt) for a turn.

Natural Shapeshifting

Natural Shapeshifting is the ability to assume the forms of animals or strange hybrids of human and beast. The character's origins determine exactly what she can change shape into.

Depending on their origins, some characters (such as were-creatures) can purchase the third, fourth or fifth ranks of the power out of order, indicating special ability in one type of shapeshifting, but if he does so he can't learn the higher ranks without purchasing previous ranks first. Some of these characters might not be able to purchase other ranks at all because of the nature of their powers.

Other characters might purchase ranks repeatedly to gain access to multiple shapes and abilities. One character might learn to see like a cat and smell like a bloodhound after purchasing Rank 1 twice, or take the shape of a cougar and a wolf by purchasing Rank 4 twice.

Action: Standard

Dice Pool: None

Price: 1 Charge

Duration: One scene at Ranks 1 to 4. One turn at Rank 5.

Rank 1: Acquire the senses of a specific animal. For example the character might be able to se in the dark like a cat. The character's sensory organs take the shape of the animal being emulated.

Rank 2: Acquire the natural weapons of an animal. These are altered (distorted or given a different size) to fit the human form. For example, the character might gain talons on her hands that inflict 2 Health damage per strike.

Rank 3: Change shape into a small animal such as a cat or raven. This provides the creature's senses innate abilities and speed. The animal is surprisingly strong and tough, though, because the character's other traits don't change. The character can't talk in animal form.

Rank 4: Change shape into an animated mist, liquid or swarm of insects (the exact form is based on the character's background. The character can't be physically harmed, but can't physically harm anyone or move anything.

Rank 5: Change into a huge, monstrous hybrid of animal and human. Increase the character's Strength by his Passion, his Dexterity by his Prudence and his Constitution by his Stoicism. Add 5 Stun and 5 Health points, which do not incur wound penalties. The character gains the base creature's senses.

Psychokinesis

Psychokinesis is the ability to move objects with sheer concentration. The character can move any object in his line of sight. Delicate actions such as untying a knot require a Wits + Prudence roll to accomplish. Striking a character with a psychokinetically hurled object is a ranged attack (and part of a multiple action that includes using the power *and* the attack itself as separate actions). It inflicts the listed damage. The type of damage (Stun or

Health) depends on the type of object. Blunt objects inflict Stun damage, while sharp objects deliver Health wounds.

Action: Standard

Dice Pool: Wits + Knowledge (occult) vs. the rank being utilized.

Price: 1 Charge

Duration: One turn

Rank 1: Move 5 lbs. Inflict 2 dice of damage.

Rank 2: Move 10 lbs. Inflict 4 dice of damage.

Rank 3: Move 25 lbs. Inflict 6 dice of damage.

Rank 4: Move 50 lbs. Inflict 8 dice of damage.

Rank 5: Move 100 lbs. Inflict 10 dice of damage.

Supernatural Speed

Characters with Supernatural Speed can run and perform physical actions faster than a normal human. This power's benefits don't apply to anything except for physical actions. Characters must acquire the Power Path's ranks in order.

This power reduces dice pool penalties for multiple actions. It allows the user to apply a total number of dice to mitigate penalties for all actions equal to that listed beside each rank. These dice cannot be used to provide bonuses – they only reduce multiple action penalties. The player decides how to distribute dice between penalized actions. The power doesn't allow characters to take more actions than usual; mitigating dice can't be added to a pool that is 0 dice or less after multiple action penalties.

Example: *John's using a dice pool of 7 for all actions and has Rank 3 Supernatural Speed. He takes 3 actions, incurring a –2, –4 and –6 penalty to his action in order. He uses the power to reduce these penalties to 0, –4, and –2. He can't take a fourth action because his basic penalty would be –8, leaving him with less than a die to start.*

Action: None

Dice Pool: No activation roll required.

Price: 1 Charge

Duration: One turn

Rank 1: Mitigate 2 dice of multiple action penalties. Double base speed.

Rank 2: Mitigate 4 dice of multiple action penalties. Triple base speed.

Rank 3: Mitigate 6 dice of multiple action penalties. Quadruple base speed.

Rank 4: Mitigate 8 dice of multiple action penalties. Quintuple base speed.

Rank 5: Mitigate 10 dice of multiple action penalties. Six times base speed.

Supernatural Strength

Supernatural Strength often goes hand in hand with an inhuman physiology, but some characters display no outward sign of their body's true capabilities. Characters must acquire power ranks in order.

Action: None

Dice Pool: No activation roll required.

Price: 1 Charge

Duration: One turn.

Rank 1: Add 2 to Strength.

Rank 2: Add 3 to Strength.

Rank 3: Add 4 to Strength.

Rank 4: Add 5 to Strength.

Rank 5: Add 6 to Strength.

Supernatural Toughness

Characters with Supernatural Toughness can shrug off gunfire, stab wounds – even the silver and fire of a monster hunter. This power might manifest as iron-hard skin or it might let weapons leave gory wounds while the character shows no sign of pain or disability.

The Toughness bonus provided by this power even applies to the character's special vulnerability. Use it instead of the character's innate Toughness, which usually doesn't apply.

Action: None; constant

Dice Pool: Always active

Price: None

Duration: One turn

Rank 1: Add 1 to Toughness.

Rank 2: Add 2 to Toughness.

Rank 3: Add 3 to Toughness.

Rank 4: Add 4 to Toughness.

Rank 5: Add 5 to Toughness.

Magic

Magic is a power with wide ranging effects. The loose rules below provide guidelines for casting freeform spells. The GM and group need to work

together in good faith to use them in interesting ways that won't disrupt the course of an enjoyable story.

Like power paths, magic spells often require Charges. Once again, the Charge stands for mystical energy; its exact type depends on how the character learned magic. Some occultists might have personal Essence scores, while others make do with sacrifices and concentration.

The Art

Occultists purchase a special power called an Art. There are many Arts, named after the magical theories and belief systems that brought them into existence. Wicca, Thaumaturgy, the Dao – each Art defines and limit an occultist's magical abilities.

All characters "know" the Dark Art at a rating equal to their Madness (including 0), but it takes additional study or artifacts to channel its fearsome power.

Praxis

Each Art has several Praxes (singular: Praxis). These are areas of specific magical ability. Describe each Praxis with a single word or a short phrase. The phrase must be appropriate to the base Art. Traditional Western thaumaturgy might have an Aurem (Air) Praxis, while witches could work with Horned Herne and his aspects.

The Law of Nemesis

The Law of Nemesis prevents broad Praxes from becoming too powerful. It states that *every power has its nemesis.* When you create a Praxis, you must also create a Nemesis that is just as broad. Auram's Nemesis is Terram (Earth). If a Thaumaturge uses Auram to influence certain emotions, then different emotions lie in the domain of Terram – and Auram will have trouble moving these "earthy" feelings.

If you use a Praxis to affect any supernatural power related to its Nemesis (even accidentally) you must re-roll your successful dice and accept the final result. A Nemesis can punch through a sturdy magical shield or repel a bolt of pure power. As a result, many occultists study their Praxes' Nemeses and learn them, shoring up the weaknesses in their approach.

When two Praxes are each other's Nemeses, the disadvantage applies to *both*; dueling Air and Earth Thaumaturgists easily nullify each other's spells. Mutual Nemesis is common, but not mandatory. For example, Daoist sorcerers prefer a cycle of elemental Nemeses, where Metal is the Nemesis of Wood, Wood is the Nemesis of Earth, Earth is the Nemesis of Water, Water is the Nemesis of Fire and Fire is the Nemesis of Wood.

Fortunately, a Praxis affects natural manifestations of its Nemesis more powerfully than other phenomena. Re-roll failed dice when using magic to

influence the Nemesis' *nonmagical* forms – that is, anything that is not the result of a currently active spell created by an occult Art.

Sample Arts and Praxes

Animism

Animism is the belief that all things have a sentient spirit. Plants, animals and even machines have secret intelligences that enforce the laws of the universe by habit and choice. Animists perform magic by calling upon the spirits of the world and channeling their power. They have a social, emotional relationship with the supernatural and usually view themselves as living brides between magic and the ordinary world.

Animist magic uses herbs and animal remains, warding circles, chants and mind-altering substances and trances. Animist rituals involve wilderness retreats, sweat lodges and meditating circles, with conduits like musical instruments, jewelry or crafts that tell the spirits' legends. Animists rely on their sheer strength of personality to press spirits into helping them.

Praxes: Medicine/Disease, War/Peace, the Trickster/Honor, Animals/Humans, Stones/Rivers, Questing/Contemplation.

Thaumaturgy

Thaumaturgists see magic as an ur-science with unique laws and principles. Thaumaturgists approach magic meticulously, through experiments and esoteric theorems. They write down every observation and synthesize them into working methods. Thaumaturgy is the prevalent Western magical tradition. Most of its practitioners consider it the one true Art.

Thaumaturgy uses magical diagrams, alchemy, astrology, numerology, obscure formulae, magical geometry, forgotten languages and other uncommon lore. Its rituals involve magical circles, wands and sanctified weapons. Thaumaturgists rely on their keen capacity for devising, analyzing and memorizing formulae.

Praxes/Nemeses: Earth/Air, Fire/Water, Angels/Demons, the Word/Silence.

Faith

Students of ancient societies often say that magic and religion are just different sides of the same coin (or the same side for those who include them with science). Faith is a style of magic practiced by the ordained priests of every religion, but they aren't the only ones. Only the truly devout can muster enough will to work magic, and they are not always ordained. Devotion and sheer conviction are the keys to faith magic

Faith workers use holy symbols, sacred paraphernalia, beads and other praying aids. Faith rituals are prayer circles, lectures about scripture, blessings and sometimes extreme demonstrations like self-flagellation, fasting or pain tolerance. Faith workers rely on awareness and social

acumen to comprehend the vastness of their deity's will.

Praxes/Nemeses: Blessing/Cursing, Healing/Disease, Knowledge/Deception, Protection/Wrath, the Flock/the Outcast

The Dark Art

The Dark Art is infamous but rare. It's the preserve of demon-worshippers, insane cultists and people who've learned sanity-fraying alien sciences. The Dark Art doesn't require as much study as the others – the sinister intelligences behind it have seen to that.

Anyone can cast Dark Art spells because everyone has a Dark Art rating: their Madness score, even when it's 0. Any character can cast a Dark Art spell by referring to a blasphemous text at the time of casting, using a forgotten, disgusting machine made of flesh or employing any number of other artifacts. Only a few people move on to formal study. As they rise through the ranks they need to perform obscene experiments and examine alien perspectives that ruin the mind, but open the door to further insights.

The Dark Art cannot use sacrifices in the form of Madness, but it does drive practitioners mad. Casting a Dark Art spell from a tome is an experience with a Disturbance Rating equal to the Praxis rank in the tome. Learning a Dark Art's Praxes for automatically adds a rank of Madness per Praxis.

Praxes/Nemeses: Mutation/Nature, Demons/Angels, Necromancy/Life, Doom/Serendipity.

Mysticism

Mystics believe that self-knowledge is the key to enlightenment. Magic is a side effect of a refined consciousness. Mystics often say that there are no real divisions between things. Duality is a useful illusion we use to communicate with the universe, but the reality is that all minds are pat of the same mind and that an individual is only an extension of the cosmos. A mystic can reach past the illusion to miraculous effect.

Meditation is the core of mystical practice. Occultists use crystals, complex geometric designs, martial arts, chant and even sensory deprivation chambers. These hone the mystic's intuitive powers. Constant discipline ensures that stray thoughts and fixations don't interfere with the mystic's formidable psychic gifts.

Praxes/Nemeses: Truth/Illusion, Emotions/Matter, Movement/Stillness, Heaven/Earth

Casting a Spell

To cast a spell, imagine its occult rationale (why it works), theme (what it's supposed to do) and mode of operation (how it works). A single spell must have a single theme and mode of operation. You can't mix two unrelated

objectives or magical operations into the same spell by, for example, healing someone and cleaning your house.

Once you've done that, determine its Difficulty, pay one Charge and make a spellcasting roll of Art + Praxis to meet or exceed the Difficulty level. A single spell has a base difficulty of one success and is increased or decreased by the effects of the spell as follows. Casting a standard spell takes a turn and can be part of a set of multiple actions. Occultists who want to cast truly mighty spells use ritual magic (see below) instead. This takes considerably more time.

Range and Sympathy

An occultist can cast a spell that affects any location in his line of sight or anyone or anything to which he has a sympathetic bond. Here's how you do it.

Get part of the target: Hair, nail clippings and other body parts can be used to establish the bond, but once used, they're powerless. Owing something that was part of an inanimate target works the same way.

An occultist's magic is also a part of him, so his active spells and artifacts can be used to establish a bond.

Plant part of yourself on the target: Occultists can slip a part of themselves on the target by planting hair clippings, casting spells on them and so forth. The same body part (a particular nail clipping, for instance) can't be used twice.

Relatives: Parents, children and siblings can be used to get the bond. They must be present at the casting. Inanimate targets can sometimes be affected by a person who is powerfully responsible for their existence or current state. An architect or foreman might be a building's mystical "parent."

Love: Anyone who genuinely loves or used to love the target can help establish the bond by being present for the spell.

If the caster can't get a sympathetic bond, consult the following list to determine the difficulty of casting beyond line of sight:

- Line of Sight of Sympathetic Bond +0 Difficulty.
- Very Familiar (used to live in the apartment, favorite uncle): +1 Difficulty
- Fairly Familiar (favorite bar, coworker): +2 Difficulty
- Vaguely Familiar (hometown, former classmate): +3 Difficulty
- Visited or Met (sat beside on the bus or went there on vacation): +4 Difficulty
- Seen and Knows Location (Hollywood star, knows that he's home and

where his home is): +5 Difficulty

- Seen *or* Knows Location: +6 Difficulty
- Knows name and some other information ("John Smith who works on the fifth floor"): +7 Difficulty
- No name or information ("Which John Smith?"): Impossible

Area and Target

If the spell's encompasses an area, one success covers five square feet. Every additional success doubles this, so that (for example) four extra successes cover 80 square feet. This must be a contiguous area with a regular shape (oval, circle, square, etc) and cannot meander around inconvenient targets. If the spell targets individuals, basic success affects the caster, and each additional success affects one other person.

Most spells either have a number of targets or an area, not both. Thus, a spell to put everyone in a room to sleep would be based on targets, while one to illuminate the room would use scope. When in doubt, use the higher Difficulty.

Successes devoted to extra targets or area can't be used to increase a spell's effects.

Effects

Spells have various effects:

Damage: Each additional success inflicts one point of Stun damage to all vulnerable targets or anyone caught in the spell's area. Every two successes can inflict one point of Health or Will damage instead. The sorcerer must describe the source of the damage.

Protection: Each additional success adds one point of Toughness to targets. A spell can also set up a barrier or other hindrance like a ward, wall of force or aura of confusion. Each additional success contributes to the success threshold for overcoming the hazard.

Enhancement and Cursing: Each additional success adds one die to a particular die roll. Every two successes can add one rank to an Attribute instead.

Occultists can cast curses that reduce dice pools and Attributes instead, but can't reduce Attributes to 0 this way.

Summoning: A summoned spirit requires at last three additional successes to give it a Prudence, Stoicism and Passion of 1. Each additional success beyond that can be used to increase any of these traits (or rather, summon a spirit with more powerful traits).

General Effects: If a spell does none of the above, employ the following guidelines. If the spell has:

- A trivial effect (like seeing in the dark): + 0 Difficulty.
- A minor effect (like cleaning a house or conjuring a knife): + 1 Difficulty.
- A basic effect (like growing 2 Damage claws or seeing invisible spirits): + 2 Difficulty.
- A moderate effect (like electrocuting someone or projecting an aura of friendship): + 3 Difficulty.
- A serious effect (like turning lead to gold or flying): + 4 Difficulty.
- A powerful effect (like summoning a demon or teleporting): + 5 Difficulty.
- A mighty effect (like traveling to the underworld or turning into a giant): + 6 Difficulty.
- A legendary effect (like making a castle or convincing a demon to repent) +7.

Duration: Some spells rely on a particular duration**.** If the spell lasts:

- An instant (generally long enough for a combat attack): +0 Difficulty.
- A turn: +1 Difficulty
- A scene: +2 Difficulty
- A few Hours: +3 Difficulty
- A few days: +4 Difficulty
- A few Months: +5 Difficulty
- A few Years: +6 Difficulty
- Forever: +7 Difficulty

Hanging and Cancellation: An occultist can hang a spell, preserving it for future use. To hang a spell increase the difficulty for the duration it will hang separate from its active duration. This has a price, however: The extra difficulty for hanging the spell is added to all other spells cast, until the occultists uses the hung spell.

Occultists can always cancel their spells with a moment’s concentration. They can also build in a condition under which anyone can activate a hung spell or end a running spell like a command word or action.

Critical Failure

When a spell suffers a critical failure it goes . . . bad. The consequences of critical failure can be divided into the following rough categories. Consequences usually last for the duration the spell was supposed to have or long enough to have an effect on the story – whichever is longer.

Attack: A creature (usually a spirit) is called from elsewhere to battle the caster (and often any bystanders as well).

Augment: The spell was supposed to weaken or destroy its target, but it makes the target more powerful instead. A spell that deals damage might heal its target or cause it to grow in power, for example.

Being Change: The spell seemingly succeeds, but the subject of the spell (or, in rare cases, the caster) undergoes a dramatic change of Being. Sinners become saints; hardened survivalists turn into vulnerable, compassionate people. The subject generally tries to keep its new outlook a secret.

Damage: Either the caster or the target takes damage as the consequence of failure.

Delusion: The caster believes the spell had the desired effect, but in fact it had no effect or a very different one.

Falsehood: The spell (typically a divination) delivers false results to the caster, but the caster believes the results are true.

Hostile Spell: The caster of the spell is targeted by a harmful spell. It might come from an enemy sorcerer, but it might be woven from the fabric of magic itself.

Madness: The spell had a Disturbance Rating and might drive the caster insane.

Mirrorcast: The spell has the opposite effect of what was intended.

Reversal: The spell affects the caster rather than the intended target.

Magical Artifacts

Anyone with an Art can create magical artifacts that anyone can use. To create one, cast spells on an object that fits your Art. Each spell's successes add to the difficulty of the next spell. This makes it difficult to load an item with lots of spells. Once you've cast all of the spells you want to give an item it's time to determine how long they'll last and how to activate and dismiss them.

Here are your options:

The artifact's magic will fade away in time: Spend a charge to sever it from your occult will, so that another person can use it.

The artifact has charges: Add 1 to the difficulty for every 2 charges of capacity. Anyone with an Art can fill it wit charges.

Spending the charge activates a spell within for its listed duration.

The artifact is permanent: Add 7 to the difficulty and perform a sacrifice. This allows another person to use the item.

The artifact combines the above for different spells: Use of the rules above and apply them separate to the spells they apply to.

Ritual Magic

Characters who want to cast more powerful spells can use ritual magic. This is a extended roll; the caster makes an Art + Praxis skill check every 10 minutes and totals the successes until she meets or exceeds the Difficulty. Critical failure utterly destroys the working and ruins the magical energies around the caster. She may not attempt the ritual until she's had eight hours of uninterrupted rest. Ritual casting requires one sacrifice per roll.

Because of the unusual outcomes possible on a failure, the GM may choose to make these skill checks secretly. Doing this prevents the player of the caster from knowing whether a ritual has succeeded or failed. If the consequence of failure are immediate and severe (such as death), the effect is obvious, and concealing it serves no purpose.

Interrupting Rituals

It's possible to take a break from (or suffer interruptions in the midst of) a ritual, and then finish up later. This makes the ritual a bit harder. For each turn the ritual is interrupted, the required total successes increase by 1. Time spent on interruptions does not count toward the ritual's casting time.

Ritual Teamwork

Anyone with the required skills and components can cast rituals and multiple, trained casters can cooperate on them using the normal rules for teamwork in Chapter Two.

Assistants who lack the necessary skill can still help by performing rituals actions under the direction of trained casters. If they aren't necessary components of the ritual themselves, one untrained participant adds one die per roll, two add two dice, four add three dice, and after that each doubling of the number adds an additional die. For instance, 512 untrained assistants would add 10 dice per roll.

The Price

Power has a price that depends upon its origin. This price takes the form of charges (for lesser manifestations) and sacrifices (for major manifestations).

Charges

A charge is a small expression of will, mild physical trauma or a somewhat taxing ritual act. You must select the type of charge you need to use when you first introduce a power into the game, so some powers will only use Will-based charges, while others only use Essence-based charges. Charge types include:

Damage: Two points of Stun damage or one point of Health damage convert to one charge. This damage ignores Toughness.

Essence: Characters with an Essence score can spend one point of Essence per charge. See Essence, below, for more details.

Will Points: Characters can spend a point of Will per charge.

A Sacrifice: One sacrifice converts into five charges, but the reverse is not true.

Sacrifices

A sacrifice pays the price for major manifestations of a power. Like charges, various powers require specific sacrifices. Sacrifices include:

Attribute Ranks: Reduce an Attribute by one rank for one sacrifice. The rank is permanently drained.

Death: Kill an intelligent being in a prescribed ritual fashion for one sacrifice.

Madness: Acquire an automatic rank of Madness for one sacrifice.

Will Ranks: Reduce permanent Will ranks by one for one sacrifice.

Essence

Some supernatural characters have *Essence*: personal occult energy that can be converted into charges, fueling their special powers. Powerful beings have more Essence, but as a baseline, may supernatural characters have 10 points to start. They also have an Essence rank equal to their Essence points: the maximum Essence they can store at any given time.

Each type of creature has its own method for refueling Essence. Creatures that prey on humans might regain it in one or more the following ways – never all of them.

Drain Life: Inflicting one point of Health damage gains the creature one point of Essence. Some creatures can cannibalize their own bodies, but most have the power to drain Health points through close physical contact – and combat with an unwilling donor. Unintelligent creatures only provide 1 Essence point per 2 Health points.

Drain Essence: Draining Essence from another supernatural being restores the creature’s essence on a one for one basis. Creatures that drain Essence from other supernatural beings can usually take it from other sources as well and use the same methods. A unwilling donor can make a Will roll to reduce their Essence loss (and donation) by one point per success.

Drain Will: Draining Will points from a victim restores the creature’s essence on a one for one basis. Creatures that can drain Will often have the ability to do so while a target is sleeping or over the course of a day by making a Passion + Charisma roll. Each success drains a point of Will from

the victim. If the creature fails, he must choose another victim, and he can only drain Will once per day per point of Passion.

Places of Power: Some magical places radiate energy that certain supernatural beings can harvest. These places have a rating between 2 and 10, representing the maximum amount of Essence the character can draw per day. The character usually meditates for an hour, making a Wisdom + Prudence roll; each success harvests a point of Essence. If the character drains more than half of the available Essence, the place of power may lose its qualities for days, weeks or even permanently.

Other Uses for Essence

Some creatures have the ability to use Essence to do more than fuel supernatural powers. These gifts might include the following:

Boost Attributes: Some creatures can spend Essence to temporarily boost certain Attributes (usually Mental, Physical or Social Attributes, but not more than one category). Each point of Essence increases one Attribute by one rank for the scene, up to rank 5 (or 6 for Heroic characters). After rank 6, additional ranks only last for one turn.

Heal: One Essence can heal two Stun Points or one Health Point. Two Essence points can heal one rank of Attribute damage.

Power XP Costs

The following XP costs apply to supernatural powers. See Chapter One for basic XP and advancement rules.

Power Paths: x7

Art: x11

Praxis: x9

Essence: You can’t usually buy the starting 10 Essence, but if you allow characters to purchase additional Essence, treat the first new rank as the first rank of Essence (not the 11th) and impose a x5 multiplier from there.

Spirits

Spirits are beings who naturally have a non-corporeal form and dwell on another plane of existence – a separate spirit world or a subtle place parallel to our own dimension. Some spirits (such as ghosts) were once human but most of them are aliens in the corporeal world.

Many spirits can take a solid form in the mundane world, but a few – including the most powerful – must be summoned by an occultist, artifact or a set of rare circumstances. Spirits can look like anything, but their appearances tend to reflect their true nature. Their looks aren’t bound by the laws of physics or biology even while manifested in the mundane world.

Spirits cannot, however, counterfeit the appearance of another human being or (with the exception of animae and the things they represent), any other creature or object unless they use their Domain.

It's up to you to determine what kinds of spirits populate your game, but to help to play immediately we'll divide spirits into the following categories:

Animae: Animae are the spirits of material objects. Most are spirits of nature, representing the magical side of rivers, animals, plants and so forth. A few personify machines, computers or particular human dreams. Animae are concerned with the health of the things they personify. All of their urges and thoughts revolve around the things they represent. This makes their perspectives quite alien to humans. Tree spirits have inscrutable tree0ish thoughts and war spirits ignore even the most reasonable arguments for peace.

Animae dwell in the Spirit World: a plane that mirrors our world, but where the spirits of objects, places and living beings are visibly active. Some regions in the Spirit World have no material parallels, but these are difficult and dangerous to visit.

Demons: Demons are malevolent spirits who delight in tormenting sentient beings, particularly humans. Demons rarely have the ability to enter the mortal world on their own, but they will often possess humans who perform immoral acts. Nobody knows whether demons serve some greater personification of evil. Given that they lie constantly, it's doubtful anyone will ever know for sure.

Demons live in Hell – or a place that might as well be Hell. Humans who've claimed to have visited the realm of demons come back with inconsistent stories – at least, the ones who are still sane do. Hell has no connection to the mortal plane except through a few legendary portals.

Ghosts: Ghosts are either human souls or copies of them that persist past the original's demise. Nobody knows for sure. Many ghosts are obsessed with their former lives (or what they think are their former lives) and often have the power to affect the mortal world.

Ghosts dwell in the Underworld: a joyless place inhabited by the dead. Part of the Underworld is parallel to the mortal world, and while there, hosts can see what's happening among the living. Ghosts can travel through objects and places that were important to them in life to reach the Deep Underworld, where ancient judge-gods govern the dead.

Strangers: Strangers are spirits from beyond the known universe – even the known magical universe. A few of them look like perfectly ordinary people, but others are collections of flagella, faceted eyes and rippling shadows that inspire madness. Most Strangers need special assistance (rituals, sacrifices, etc.) to persist in the material world. Cults form around the Strangers to help them but even they cannot say what these enigmatic beings truly want.

Nobody knows the Strangers' home plane. People say they live in some anti-reality, or that they come from other worlds where magic's laws differ from our own.

Creating a Spirit

Spirits have a simpler set of game statistics than characters. Here's how you design them.

Emotional Traits

Spirits don't have Attributes or Skills, They use Emotional Traits to perform all tasks. Divide available ranks between Passion, Prejudice and Stoicism from a pool based on the spirit's power. Each category also has a maximum Trait level, listed in parentheses

- **Familiar:** 4 – 6 (4)
- **Lesser:** 7 – 9 (5)
- **Guardian:** 10 – 12 (6)
- **Greater:** 13 – 15 (7)
- **Major:** 16 – 18 (8)
- **Prince:** 19 – 27 (9)
- **Divine:** Beyond game traits; automatically succeeds or fails according to its nature and the story.

Other Statistics

Emotional Traits the basis of most of the spirit's other game stats. They are:

Domain: All spirits have a Domain statistic which is the average of their Emotional Traits, rounded down. Like a magical Praxis, a Domain has a descriptor, based on the spirit's nature. The spirit can spend a point of Essence and use the Domain like a Praxis except that it can't use rituals. Also, select a Nemesis, since the Domain still obeys the Law of Nemesis.

Essence: The spirit's total Emotional Traits constitute its Essence score. Essence replaces Health points. Spirits are immune to Stun damage and any attack that relies on a mortal physiology to function. They cannot be poisoned or suffocated, for instance. Essence points also power a spirit's Domain abilities.

When a spirit runs out of Essence it vanishes and reforms on its native plane, regaining a point of Essence per day until it is fully healed. At that point it can roam freely again. Many spirits can be permanently exiled with special rituals and secret names, however, or by weapons that do it special harm.

Spirit Powers

Some spirits have powers other than the gifts provided by Domains. Here are the most common:

Communication: Some spirits can communicate with material beings by spending a point of Essence. This produces a stylized message. Spirits have inspired visions, whispered in ears or left bloody notes in mirrors. The spirit can hear responses to its message no matter its location but it can eavesdrop on other affairs only while in the same location on a parallel plane. The Essence point pays for a scene of communication

Animae with Communication pay no Essence cost when using the thing they represent as a medium. Some computer Animae can easily talk to you through your word processor, for instance. Ghosts with Communication pay no Essence cost if they do so using a place or object that was important to them in life. Many ghosts easily spell “GET OUT” on the walls of their old homes.

Corporeal Form: The spirit can appear in the mundane world by spending a point of Essence per scene.

Possession: The spirit can possess a human (some spirits possess animals and objects as well) by making a Passion + Stoicism roll with a Difficulty equal to the victim’s Will. The victim can try to break free by spending a Will point and making a Will roll with a difficulty equal to the spirit’s Passion. The victim can try to break free as often as every turn but can’t make attempts when he runs out of Will. This is not fruitless, however. Even an unsuccessful attempt drains a point of Essence from the spirit. Some victims choose to wait until the spirit has somehow weakened itself.

While possessed, the spirit controls the victim’s body and has access to its physical abilities (including Skills and Attributes), but must rely on its own mental and social talents, based on its Emotional Traits. The spirit can only use the victim’s physical supernatural powers (such as Supernatural Strength) and no others. It doesn’t have the victim’s memories either, so clever spirits study a target before possessing it. The victim is conscious throughout, a prisoner in her own body, witnessing the spirit’s actions through her own eyes.

Possession lasts for a scene, but after that, the spirit can choose to hang around as a passive passenger in the victim, experiencing what she does.

Occultists are difficult to possess because they can counter with a spell if they have an appropriate Praxis. NPCs with a Madness of 6 or higher can be possessed without a roll, so spirits who enjoy possession usually try to drive their hosts insane.

Spirit Actions

Spirits use the following dice pools to perform actions.

Combat: Spirits roll Passion + Stoicism to attack and Prudence + Stoicism to defend. Spirits inflict Health damage but do not have weapons unless they pick them up or exercise their Domains.

Other Actions: Spirits roll Passion + Stoicism to perform active tasks (sneaking, physical feats, intimidating or deceiving someone), Passion + Prudence to perform passive tasks such as sensing hidden things, picking out clues or hiding intentions, and Prudence + Stoicism to resist a unwanted influence. If the spirit is ill-suited to the task because of its nature it must spend a point of Essence to make the attempt, as spirits have trouble contradicting their own natures. If it is suited to the task it can use its Domain to cast the equivalent of an Enhancing spell, also for 1 Essence.

Vulnerabilities

Remember that supernatural beings often have special vulnerabilities. See Chapter One and Three for details.

Some vulnerabilities (like the sun) do no damage to normal humans. In these cases, assess the damage based on the level of exposure, ranging between 2 dice (for minimal exposure) to 10 dice (for the maximum possible exposure). If the effect is ambient, apply the damage every turn.

Sample Vulnerabilities: Silver, living wood, fire, the sun, pure iron, electricity, blessed items.

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